

T H E
EFFECTS OF THE PASSIONS,
O R
MEMOIRS OF FLORICOURT.
FROM THE FRENCH.
IN THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. III.

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T H E

EFFECTS of the PASSIONS,

O R

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B O O K T H E F I F T H.

I RETURNED to my own apartment, full of the events of which I had just heard the recital, and shedding tears at the fate of Madame Vareuil, her husband, and daughter. I exclaimed, I am not then the only unhappy being on earth, since there are others whose misfortunes equal mine, and perhaps exceed them! I now entered into a circumstantial investigation of the foundation of this extraordinary law-suit, and plainly

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discovered

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discovered that its issue must be precarious. Were humanity alone to have pronounced the sentence, I made no doubt but that it would have been given in favour of a child, who, being an object of compassion, required a proper provision to be made for it. But the laws, which were established for the good of society in general, and intended to regulate the conduct of every individual, spoke a different language; as every citizen was subject to them from his birth, and could not, in case of a breach of them, escape the punishment they inflicted both on him and his children.

I would not, however, depend on my own judgment; and therefore drew up a state of the case, in which I adduced every argument I could think of to strengthen the pretensions of Madame Vareuil, and to weaken the objections of her adversaries; saying, that though the vows of her husband precluded his entering into the marriage state, and therefore invalidated the right of his children; yet as they had been compulsive, and taken at an age when he was unable to
judge

judge of their importance, they ought to be set aside, especially as he had solicited to obtain an abrogation of them.

I the next morning went very early to four different lawyers, and showing them the paper I had drawn up, desired them to add their notes to it pro and con, according to their judgment; and then returned to Madame Vareuil, in order to give her an account of what I had done. She thanked me for my good offices with an effusion of heart that strongly affected me, (though I desired her to be silent on the subject, as I was her son) while Silvia, all in tears, took my hand, pressed it with an air of softness, and exclaimed, my brother is very dear to me! —he has preserved my mother's life! These words had a powerful effect on me, I looked on Silvia with more tenderness than usual, and exclaimed in my turn—yes! you shall be my sister, whatever happens!—for I have no other—and shall partake of the little all which fortune has still left me! We now lived together in that state of sweet familiarity which confidence alone inspires; endeavouring

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vouring to fulfill those duties which the characters we had assumed required of us, and were as strongly united to each other, as if bound by consanguinity; I for my own part being as much attached to Madame Vareuil and her daughter, as if I had been really their son and brother.

As our lodgings were rather expensive, and as Madame Vareuil was always under apprehensions of Valoure, who she made no doubt had some connexion in the house, we resolved to quit them. I therefore hired a small apartment, and furnished it in a decent manner, avoiding all superfluities, and confining myself to what was needful and commodious. To this apartment we removed in a few days, with all imaginable precaution, and became one family.

After we were settled in our new habitation, I again called on the lawyers with whom I had left the state of the case I had drawn up, and found them unanimous in their opinion—which was, that Madame Vareuil had nothing to hope for; one tribunal having
already

already given it against her. Afflicted at this news, I endeavoured to bring about an accommodation by applying to her brother in law ; but he was too well acquainted with the goodness of his cause to listen to any thing that could be offered, and my labour was all in vain.

As the law-suit was already begun ; and as we were obliged to go on with it, by Vareuil's insisting on its being determined one way or other, a celebrated counsellor offered to plead the cause of the unfortunate Madame Vareuil and her daughter. I ask for no reward, said he. Your friends shall be at no expence. It is my duty as well as that of every one in my profession to succour the oppressed ; and if I do not obtain an happy issue in this cause, I hope I shall at least be able to extort a decent pension for the widow and her daughter.

This generous offer, though it did not inspire me with great expectation, gave me a gleam of hope, and I immediately communicated to Madame Vareuil what had passed:

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Her great sensibility heightened the value of my feeble endeavours to serve her, for which she thanked me every hour ; and I in my turn grew more attached to her than ever.

My anxiety continually leading me to the place where this law-suit was to be determined, I at last heard the lawyer whom I have already mentioned, exhaust every argument that could be adduced by eloquence and humanity in vain, as the sentence was pronounced against Madame Vareuil. Doubly distressed by the unfavorable issue of this affair, and the necessity I was under of being the messenger of ill news, I hesitated some time ; but was at length compelled to inform Madame Vareuil of her ill success. She immediately read in my countenance the purport of what I was going to say ; and lifting up her eyes and hands to Heaven, exclaimed—great God ! thou hast then decreed that my troubles should last for life, and that misfortune and disgrace should attend both myself and daughter !—Thy will be done ! She remained silent for some time ;

time; and then addressed me thus—Oh Floricourt! how great are my obligations to you!—obligations that I can never repay!—all I have now to offer is a grateful heart, on which your good offices are deeply engraven. Your esteem is all the recompence I desire for my trifling services, replied I; and therefore intreat you never to mention them more. I am far from happy in my circumstances; but whatever fate has allotted me shall be equally divided between us:—this I insist upon as a mark of that friendship which you profess. I then turned towards Silvia with great emotion, and exclaimed, unfortunate creature! how hard is thy fate!—thou in whose favour neither nature or humanity have pleaded!—who art forsaken by thy relations—made an outcast from society—and abandoned to poverty and shame!—Yet, no! thou hast still a brother!—an affectionate brother!—who will never abandon you.

As I every day became more interested about this amiable young creature, I endeavoured

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voured to investigate her heart, and discovered it to be replete with sensibility, generosity, and an ardent love of virtue. Her gratitude to me was unbounded; and she seemed to think she never did enough to testify it. I now never left her without regret, and never returned to her without joy, her presence being necessary to my happiness; —But this was not yet love. I still thought of Julia with grief, and her image pursued me even in the presence of Silvia. I felt that they were both dear to me; and yet I had no idea of substituting the latter in the room of the former. I only felt that Silvia was necessary to my happiness as a sister, and therefore I indulged the most tender sentiments in her favor, never once suspecting that they in the least exceeded those of an affectionate brother.

As Madame Vareuil (who was firmly resolved to lessen the expence I was at on her own and Silvia's account) took in needle-work, in spite of my urgent intreaties to the
contrary,

contrary, many people were admitted to our apartments to bring and take away work.

A young man, whose name was Bellon, and who occupied an apartment close to ours, came to visit us under pretence of being a neighbour, and conducted himself with great politeness and decorum. Though he was well received, his visits were at first short, and seldom repeated; but they at length became so long, and frequent, as to cause strange emotions in my heart. I could not see his assiduities with regard to Silvia without a secret inquietude, and soon became thoughtful, gloomy, and sullen, all the time he staid. This mechanical grief ingrossed me intirely, though I paid no attention to it, nor ever considered its source. Silvia however opened my eyes by asking me one day, when Bellon was present, whether I was ill? These few words let me into the state of my heart, and I answered, no;—after which I immediately retired to my room, and questioned myself as follows.—What can be the meaning of all this? cried I—What can be the

cause of my being thus strangely out of humour?—Am I never to be at peace?—has time not yet been able to subdue my affliction—But what can be the meaning of Bellon's assiduities?—And yet what is that to me?—Is he not a man of honor?—Have I any thing to urge against his visits?—Is not Madam Vareuil at liberty to receive him when she pleases?—Silvia may perhaps see him with pleasure.

As I sighed at this idea; I exclaimed with terror.—Heavens!—can I be jealous!—can I, after Julia, think of any other woman?—No!—it is impossible!—The sorrows that have exhausted all the feelings of my heart, can never suffer it to entertain another passion.

A thousand tumultuous ideas now rushed into my mind, and rendered me incapable of fixing upon any. I however remained musing for some time, and then returned to Silvia, whom I looked at with attention, and discovered that she was not displeased at Bellon's absence, and that she observed me with a tender inquietude.

The

The cloud by which I had been surrounded now dispersed by degrees. I became more gay; and Silvia became so likewise. As I found Bellon was to make a journey, and as I knew he could not return for some days, the weight that oppressed me was removed, and I passed a sweet tranquil evening, forgetting the cause of my former inquietude.

While I lived in this happy state, ignorant of my real situation, and never reflecting on it, Madam Vareuil, enfeebled by grief and infirmities, was suddenly taken ill. This gave me great uneasiness; and I spared neither assiduity or expence to render her every service in my power. Silvia was continually in tears, except when she approached her mother, whom she wished to keep ignorant of her danger; and when I endeavoured to inspire her with hopes, she exclaimed,—O Floricourt, do not attempt to console me! —the fate of the best of mothers cannot but afflict and distress me.—You know her history—you know what she has done to serve me—you know all I owe her! O, Floricourt!—

court!—O, my brother!—should I lose her! this distressing idea presents itself continually to my mind; it grieves and overwhelms me with affliction. No, my dear sister, answered I; Heaven will not, I am sure, deprive us of her; it will compassionate our tears and anguish; it will spare her to our prayers. She was strongly affected by what I said, and by the solicitude I discovered for the recovery of her mother, and testified her gratitude in the most lively expressions of acknowledgement.—She called me her brother—her friend—and caressed me in the most affectionate manner.

When the crisis of Madame Vareuil's illness arrived, the physician informed me that if she lived three hours, and then fell asleep, she would recover. Of this I said nothing to Silvia; nor did I suffer any body to watch by her but myself and the nurse. While the critical hours were elapsing, I endured mortal inquietudes for Madame Vareuil, who seemed all that time without sense, dreadful convulsions alone proving her existence;

ence; convulsions that grew more terrible towards the end of the last hour. The nurse really thought her dying; while I, shuddering at her condition, watched her every motion, and saw her struggle violently against death. After a long and severe conflict, however, she grew sick, and was relieved by a copious vomiting. When she came to herself, and saw me, she complained of being very weak, said she was in need of repose, and soon after fell into a profound sleep. Notwithstanding this happy omen, I still feared; and therefore remained by her bed side till the physician came, which was at break of day. He felt her pulse for some minutes, though she was still sleeping, and at length pronounced her out of danger. Transported with joy, I instantly ran to inform Silvia, who was in bed, and scarcely awake, of this happy turn in our favor. Every thing succeeds to our wish! cried I, the moment I saw her, our mother is out of danger, and the physician answers for her life! Silvia, equally transported with myself,
now

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now started up in her bed, and exclaimed—
O Floricourt! what joy do you communi-
cate!—my mother will then live,—and it is
to your attention that I owe her recovery!
—O my brother,—my dear brother!—what
obligations am I under to you! At these
words she embraced and pressed me in her
arms, with a tender sensibility that was al-
most too much for me, and which I returned
with equal tenderness. Desiring me to with-
draw, she immediately rose, and we went to-
gether to the chamber of Madame Vareuil,
who was but just awake. My children, said she,
the moment she saw us, God does not yet
call me hence; I shall still have the plea-
sure of continuing with you;—you whom
I could not have quitted without severe re-
gret.

As her habit was greatly impaired by her
misfortunes, her recovery was slow and her
convalescence tedious. I however enjoyed
the satisfaction of her return to life, and lived
in peace and tranquility, until another stroke
of adversity again threw me into despair.

Vilson,

Vilson, who had been the friend of my youth, with whom I had left the small property the malice of d'Erlet had left me, and who regularly remitted my income, now wrote me the following letter.

“ I deplore your fate, my dear Floricourt,
 “ and yet remind you that you have a friend.
 “ The person in whose hands I placed your
 “ money is unfortunately become a bank-
 “ rupt, though it is not yet clear whether
 “ you will lose it all. I shall exert myself
 “ to the utmost to serve you on this occa-
 “ sion, and have already expended much,
 “ but have still sufficient left to assist my
 “ friend.”

No words can describe what I felt at reading this letter; as my fate, which was now becoming desperate, must unavoidably involve Madame Vareuil and her daughter in my ruin. What could I now do to assist them; and how could I fulfil my promise?—besides, at what a dreadful period did this news arrive!—at a time when I had almost exhausted the money I possessed, by Madame Vareuil's

Vareuil's long illness ; to whom I dared not communicate the fatal intelligence, least her great sensibility should take the alarm, and induce her to think I grew tired of supplying her wants, and that I took this method of breaking with her. This idea was insupportable ; and I was equally averse to involving my friend in my difficulties. Madame Vareuil however soon perceived my embarrassment, and was continually enquiring into the cause of my apparent melancholy. I answered her vaguely for some time, but she at length spoke to me as follows :

You grow tired of placing a confidence in me, Floricourt, said she ; and I must no longer esteem myself a mother, or look upon you as my son and friend.

Though these words pierced me to the heart ; and though I saw my silence distressed Silvia as well as her mother, I could not assume courage enough to communicate the cause of my uneasiness, but answered by evasive arguments and false reasonings, which were paid no attention to.

As

As my money nevertheless diminished apace, I sold my ring and other valuables to renew my fund, and was soon after asked by Madame Vareuil what was become of them?—to which I answered, that they were gone to be mended. This seeming mystery was however soon after explained to her, by her accidentally seeing Vilson's letter, which I had forgot to lock up. As she knew my melancholy had commenced from the time I had received this letter, and as she was strongly interested in all that concerned me, and wished to comfort me in every distress, she thought it no breach of confidence to open and read it.—But what was her astonishment at perusing its contents!—she was now let into the mystery of my conduct, and the cause of my chagrin; and was, to her amazement, convinced that I only concealed my situation from her in order to continue my benefits to her.

Oh, Floricourt! said she, the moment I returned—most generous of men!—do not attempt to conceal your situation from me!—

I know

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I know all, and hope you will not blame the anxious curiosity of a mother ! I am not so much to be pitied, replied I, as I am still happy in your society, and hope the little all that I possess will be sufficient for us. You must not withdraw yourself from me—you must not refuse to comply with the entreaties of your son—your friend ! Madame Vareuil, who now embraced me tenderly, continued for some time inexorable to my request ; but at last yielded to my entreaties.

We now immediately retrenched our expences, and I endeavoured to get employment. But for what employment was I fit ? Without friends—without interest—I gave myself unnecessary trouble, and was at last obliged to give up my pursuit.

A sempstress who often brought work to Madame Vareuil, happening to come in at this period, saw Silvia possessed youth and beauty enough to attract an opulent lover, and therefore formed a scheme against her ; she began by relating histories of young women who had made splendid fortunes at the
expence

expenditure of honour, in order to sound the inclinations both of the mother and daughter; and finding they were quite unconcerned about what she said, fancied their indifference arose from their not being sufficiently tempted; as virtue, in her opinion, could never withstand the fascinating power of rich presents. She now withdrew; and after staying away some days, returned to inform Madame Vareuil, that the Baron de St. Clair, who was but lately returned from the Indies, very rich, wanted a great deal of linen to be made up, but being very whimsical, always insisted on seeing those he employed, and paying them with his own hands; in order, as she supposed, to prevent imposition. I have given him your direction, added she, and make no doubt but that he will be here soon. Madame Vareuil, who had no suspicion of her scheme, and perceived no inconvenience in this mode of proceeding, answered that she was always at home; and waited with impatience for her visitor. He came the next day; and was a man about
fifty

fifty years of age. Benevolence and candour were marked in his countenance : his manner was open though rough, and his conversation frank, and apparently sincere. He himself sent in the cloth, ordered how it was to be made up, and settled the price he was to pay for the making of each article. Madame Vareuil saw him frequently look at Silvia with attention; but the rough honesty of his deportment banished all apprehension, and he soon took his leave.

As my small apartment was above that of Madame Vareuil, I knew very little of what passed, and seldom went to visit her except when she was alone. Indeed the satisfaction I had formerly felt in her society, and that of Silvia, was now embittered by the dejection and profound melancholy of the latter, whose humour seemed to be totally changed, and whose eyes were often suffused in tears, which she in vain endeavoured to conceal. Madame Vareuil, who soon perceived this alteration in her daughter's disposition, often looked at her, and me in turn, in order to discover

discover its cause, while I felt great uneasiness on the occasion. An interesting scene, however, which passed soon after, cast some light on this affair. O Silvia!—Silvia!—never can this scene be obliterated from my memory!—never shall I think of it without emotion!

Madame Vareuil having one morning slept longer than usual, I came down, and seeing Silvia's room door open, went in, and seated myself in a dark part of it, from whence I could see her without being seen. She was sitting by a table in a thoughtful posture; her head supported by her hand, and her eyes bathed in tears; my emotion at this sight was too great to suffer me to advance, and therefore sitting still, I heard her pronounce some words, interrupted by long intervals. Unhappy being that I am! said she at last—O Floricourt!—too dangerous man!—to what an extremity do you reduce me! and then, after a long pause—do I then love! exclaimed she; but suddenly stopping and putting her hand to her mouth, as if
fearful

fearful of being overheard, she looked about her with an uneasy air, and again resumed the chain of her ideas.—Did he know—did he but suspect my secret, how humiliated I should be. As she rose at this moment and turned her back towards me, I escaped into an adjacent room, where she immediately joined me (being alarmed by the noise I made) and asked me with embarrassment how long I had been there? I am but just come, replied I. You are but just come! repeated she—only this moment! Yes, my sister, added I.—But why do you ask?—have you waited for me. Floricourt! said she, with greater embarrassment than before, what would you have me do?—I am so absent!—so unfortunate!—so afflicted!—but this you know very well. I know it Silvia, rejoined I!—your brother has never been thought worthy of your confidence—you perhaps despise him! Ah! Floricourt! said she, do not say that, unless you mean to add to my sorrows, and to double my affliction. I mean not to distress you, Silvia, replied I!
and

and should think myself too happy were I able to soften your grief!—yet who would not be of the same opinion!—who could know my amiable sisters merit, her engaging manners, and delicacy of sentiment, without adoring her? without interesting himself about her, and without regretting (as in my case) his inability to serve her?

I saw her countenance brighten by degrees in proportion as I proceeded. She listened to me with avidity, and seemed attentive even when I had done speaking. Cease! said she, after having reflected some time,—cease to talk to me in this manner; and then stopping as if unable to express herself further, a tear escaped her. In this manner, Silvia! returned I—what I say is dictated by truth—a brother can have no illicit view—he cannot flatter a sister!—but knowing her merit he may speak his mind freely. Fortune will at last, I make no doubt, cease to persecute you—she will smile, and all hearts will be devoted to you—some happy marriage will certainly take place, and will, by setting

ting your merit and virtue in their proper point of view, make both yourself and me happy. You! Floricourt! said she, wiping her eyes, would it make you happy? Your happiness will always constitute mine, replied I, and I am incapable of every other. Then you will never be happy! cried Silvia. And why not, answered I—why will you give up the prospect of being so? O Silvia! Silvia! added I (my heart being strongly agitated, without my suspecting the cause of its emotion) why cannot my life be subservient to your happiness!—why am I to be forever persecuted by ill fortune! These sentiments are worthy of you, said Silvia—they are noble—woe be to the woman who knows too much of you!—O Floricourt why do you appear in this favorable light! Why are you so amiable, Silvia! exclaimed I; but was forced to stop for some time, my heart being too full for utterance, tho' the starting tear proved my sensibility. Silvia, continued I, you make me forget all my misfortunes. Misfortunes! exclaimed she—
can

can you then have loved? She stopped; amazed at her own question, and trembling for my answer. I at this moment felt the full force of her influence, and immediately discovered that Julia yielded her place to Silvia, or at least reigned a joint partner in my heart. A sigh now escaped me; and I was on the point of throwing myself at her feet, when my situation restrained me, and I stopped.—Can a wretch like me, replied I, be formed for love?—can I associate another in my calamities?—O Silvia! there are beings on whom fate has imposed the cruel law either of resisting the sweet impressions that constitute their felicity, or of finding that felicity productive of the bitterest anguish.

Silvia now appeared overwhelmed by grief, and I was so also. She quitted me abruptly, and retired to her own chamber; while I continued where I was, without making an effort to detain her. I was now convinced of the state of my heart.—I love her! exclaimed I; and she may be equally affected. Unfortunate creature!—I must therefore

hold my tongue—I must conceal the sentiments of my heart, lest an avowal of them should constitute both her misfortune and my own. Yet can I have resolution to do so? Wretch that I am! exclaimed I, immediately, what has love ever offered thee but poison? deadly poison?—and wouldst thou communicate that poison to others!—remember Julia!—remember Julia's fate! I now retired to my chamber, plunged into the deepest melancholy, and endeavoured to subdue a passion which I then thought in its infancy.

Madame Vareuil, in the mean time, (who was up, and had taken her needle work) surprized at her daughter's not appearing as usual, went to her chamber and found her in tears. As this had been for some time her daughter's usual occupation, she was not surprized at it, and suspected the cause, tho' she feared applying a remedy, lest it should prove either dangerous or ineffectual.

Silvia, confused at her mother's presence, immediately dried up her tears, and trying
to

to affect a smile, asked her how she did? I am very well, answered Madame Vareuil; but how are you? Silvia now turned away and sighed, while her mother continued—my child! my dear child! extricate me out of the mortal inquietudes into which you have thrown me, and tell me the cause of your being no longer like the same person I once knew you? You are lately become thoughtful; you sigh; you tremble; and shed tears. This is not common with you, this is not your natural disposition; hide not therefore the subject of your grief—conceal not the cause of your affliction!—remember it is an affectionate mother who desires this proof of your confidence; a mother who makes no other use of the rights she has over you than to require your friendship. You know you are my only consolation; the only person that attaches me to life! O my dear mother!—my dear mother!—cried Silvia, how your goodness oppresses me! I feel all the extent of my duty—all my boundless obligations to you; but alas! if you knew—here

tears and sobs stopped her utterance, while Madame Vareuil took her in her arms, and exclaimed, my dear child, what is it you fear?—what is it you dread communicating to me?—can you doubt of my affection—can you doubt of my sympathizing tenderness? you seem to reproach yourself with something; this gives me more pain than it does you, but it cannot deprive you of my affection; you know our situation; you know the unhappy issue of the law-suit, which brought us here, and that our only dependence is on Floricourt. Do not therefore add to my grief by your despondency.

My name seemed to have a powerful effect on Silvia: she started—sighed—looked round the room—and then fixed her eyes on the door.

You seem strongly affected, said her mother. I fear—I fear for the sensibility of your tender and inexperienced heart! you are young, my child; and are ignorant of the consequences of the fatal effects which often attend a strong attachment. Alas!—how dangerous

dangerous it is for young and amiable characters to be too much together!

Silvia now wept; and Madame Vareuil continued, Oh, my child!—I see—I see—your too great susceptibility of heart will prove the cause of your misfortunes. You weep, my child; your heart is oppressed; open that heart to me—discharge your weight of woe—trust to my faithful bosom—and depend on the affection and consolation of a mother.

Silvia now exclaimed, my mother! my dear mother!—how am I confused!—how shall I ever be able to tell you!—alas! indeed I cannot! Have I lost all your confidence? said Madame Vareuil; am I no longer worthy to be trusted? Silvia, on hearing these words, threw herself immediately at her mother's feet, imploring her forgiveness; and was instantly raised, embraced, and seated in a chair, where she in vain endeavoured to speak, for sobs and tears prevented her utterance. Madame Vareuil looked at her daughter with compassion,

and perceiving her presence only added to her confusion, retired.

Being each engrossed by our own reflections for the rest of the day, we met without speaking, and Madame Vareuil, who alternately examined my countenance and that of her daughter, was confirmed in her suspicions. While I, plunged into the deepest melancholy, regretted every moment that two strong passions, each of which might have constituted my happiness, should have succeeded each other only to make me miserable.

The sweet familiarity and mutual effusions of friendship which had hitherto reigned among us, now vanished, and gave place to sighs—tears—and inquietude.

St. Clair however came in the mean time, in order to see how the work he had put in hand went on; and looking at Silvia, exclaimed, in a rough tone of voice, this lovely creature cannot fail of doing every thing well; though her hands were not made for labour; she is too charming for such employment. You keep her concealed, said he,

he, addressing himself to Madame Vareuil; she must be sought after, I find.—Leclere (the name of the sempstress) however, has not been so mysterious—let us speak plainly—I hate disguise—we suit each other—an house is preparing for you—we will talk of the necessary arrangements to-morrow.—But this sweet girl, why is she so sad?—she must be gay—I tell you that, for I hate melancholy?

Madame Vareuil, who was astonished at what he said, knew not what to answer; but at last intimated that she wished to be left at liberty to finish the work he had ordered, and which she should take care to do well, though she had no time for interruption. Aye, said St. Clair, I understand you. Leclere told me you were poor; but that don't signify; you shall want for nothing; and then rising with precipitation, threw his purse into the corner of the room, saying, a truce with gratitude, you will have time enough to thank me—to-morrow, or the day after, you shall hear from me.

Nothing could equal the surprize of Madame Vareuil, who immediately bundled up

all St. Clair's linen, together with his purse, and sent it after him with the following billet:—

“ Never have I more more strongly felt the rigour of my fate, and the effects of the cruel misfortunes that attend me, than at the moment I was exposed to your humiliating proposals. Take back your work, which I neither can nor will finish, and do me the favour of absenting yourself from me for ever.”

St. Clair read this letter with surprize: as, though he loved pleasure, and spared no pains or expence to gratify his inclinations, he possessed a fund of probity and honor, loved virtue, and respected it in others. He was at once rough, impetuous, amorous, and good. He the next day returned to Madame Vareuil, and entering her apartment with precipitation, and taking advantage of her surprize, cried out—do not be frightened at seeing me again—I only come to beg your pardon for my extravagance—Leclere wished to deceive me—she would have given me a mistress, where I shall find a friend—
do

do not be frightened—I can do good, as well as evil—you must not hate me—I will compel you to esteem me—I will not come near you for a year—for two years—nay for ten years if you desire it; provided you will esteem me. Marry your daughter to whom you will, and I will give her a fortune without any body's knowing of my having done so; and above all, keep this a secret, or I will make an uproar. Saying this, he vanished.

Madame Vareuil's confusion permitted her not to answer; and St. Clair was out of sight before she recovered from her astonishment. What he bid her keep a secret, was a purse containing an hundred Louis d'ors, and a promissory note for fifty more to be paid her the first day of every month. She returned it immediately; and in two hours after, St. Clair brought it back to her, saying, you despise me then, Madam!—you have a right to do so after my folly!—but when I swear to repair the affront, you may believe me! What, because I have done

wrong, am I to be proscribed from doing well? Justice requires that I should make amends to those whom I have unwillingly injured. Thus was he going on, enraged at Madame Vareuil's resisting his offers, when Bellon entered, who was just returned from his journey. The presence of a stranger calmed his impetuosity; and he made a sign to Madame Vareuil to say no more on the subject. Observing however that Bellon was very attentive to Silvia, he spoke to him, and having looked at him stedfastly for some time, desired to have a few minutes conversation with him; which request being granted, they both took leave of the ladies.

When they were alone, Monsieur de St. Clair began to question Bellon on the subject of his visit at Madame Vareuil's; said he was rich, and that when his daughter (meaning Silvia) married, he would give her a fortune. Bellon, who was by no means independent, and who really loved Silvia, listened to St. Clair with avidity, and received his overture with gratitude and joy.

He

He the next day returned to Madame Vareuil, and made proposals to marry her daughter; which proposals were strengthened by a letter she at the same time received from St. Clair, penned in his own manner, and full of roughness, benevolence, and generosity. Madame Vareuil received Bellon's offer with complacency, thanked him for the honor intended her, and told him her consent must depend on that of her daughter's.

Very well pleased with this answer, Bellon endeavoured to gain Silvia's consent; and though she listened to his declaration of love with coldness and chagrin, he redoubled his assiduities towards her.

I, in the mean time, who was soon informed of all that passed, was agitated beyond measure. The fatal bankruptcy which had just happened, and which had proved the wreck of my fortune, cut me off from all hope, and threw me into despair; especially as I received no news from Vilson. I detested St. Clair—I detested Bellon—and accused Silvia of giving too much encouragement to
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the latter. Had she not, thought I, by her gaiety and free manner at first engaged him, and by her bewitching softness at last enslaved him, this would not have happened. Ah! Julia! Julia!—thou wouldest not have acted thus!—thou wouldest not have so long listened to Bellon—thine air of indifference would have soon banished him for ever! I now drew a comparison between the two successive objects of my affection, and found that Julia was the superior character, but that I still loved Silvia! It was her openness, her innocence, cried I, that rendered her so gay, and it was her attractive sweetness which produced the effects which plunge me into despair!

In the midst of these reflections I returned to Silvia, in order to discover by her countenance whether the proposals made to her were agreeable or not; and finding her more melancholy than ever, became more dejected myself. I now saw I was beloved, and that I was preferred to my rival; but what could our mutual affection end in?—in the
ruin

ruin of the woman I loved, by the rejection of an advantageous offer, which might make her fortune ; by her remaining in a state of poverty, and by depriving her mother of that assistance which I was unable to afford her.

In this state of perplexity did I remain some time ; yielding in rotation to desire, contrition and fear, and rejecting them in turn. The sollicitations of Bellon in the mean time became every day more urgent, and by increasing my despair, pointed out the necessity of my taking some decisive part ; but none for some time occurred to me. Reason however came at length to my aid, and I exclaimed (though my heart was torn to pieces at the time) I must suffer alone !—I must remove the obstacle which prevents Silvia's marriage, and by my absence restore her happiness ! This conflict cost me many pangs ; but I at last triumphed over my weakness, and determined to quit the woman I loved.

Though my resolution was taken, I knew not how to announce my departure, or how to assign a reason for it. My ideas were on
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the wing for some plausible pretence, some rational motive, that might be easily admitted; but I found none. The sorrows which oppressed my heart seemed to have communicated themselves to all surrounding objects, and to have affected them with painful reflections. Silvia was afflicted beyond measure; and her mother, who wept over us, was continually soliciting Bellon for time.

Coming down one morning earlier than usual, I found Madame Vareuil alone (Silvia being still in bed) who addressed me thus— I must speak to you, Floricourt: I have long intended to do so; and have at length overcome my repugnance. We are alone. I followed her to her closet. I concluded all was over, prepared to meet my fate with resolution, and determined to make a virtue of necessity.

The moment we were seated, Madame Vareuil continued—you are a man of honor, and I will open my heart to you, who cannot but have observed the anguish of a mother at the distress of her child, and cannot
but

but participate in her affliction. I trembled at this opening, and remained silent, while my countenance expressed the state of my mind.

Don't you understand me, Sir? cry'd Madame Vareuil; don't you comprehend my meaning? can you not spare me an explanation which must cut me to the soul? you see my affliction, and know my daughter is consumed by a secret grief—a grief which is the effect of a fatal passion—a passion she disavows and condemns. You cannot however be ignorant of its object, for it is you that I suspect; conceal nothing from me—does Silvia love you?—and have you discovered that she does so?

Amazed at what she said, I could not at first reply, a croud of confused ideas rushing into my mind and suspending all my faculties; but at length coming to myself, I addressed her thus—you see my astonishment, Madam! said I—an astonishment which arises from your uncommon frankness, and the unbounded confidence you place in me—
a confidence

a confidence which demands my utmost gratitude, and exacts mine in return. Look on me as your son; an affectionate and respectful son; who knows no misfortune equal to that of displeasing you. I too (who have no reason to blush, or to reproach myself for my conduct) will open my heart to you, and discover myself as I am: the favorable sentiments which you think your daughter entertains for me, were never excited by any arts of mine; and I call Heaven to witness that (however agreeable her partiality may be) I never endeavoured to inspire her with a passion for me. You amaze me, Floricourt! said Madame Vareuil—And, I continued, truth, and the confidence I owe you, demands this confession from me, and prove the integrity of my soul. I love Silvia!—I love her with the utmost ardor!—her innocence—her frankness—and openness of heart, struck the first blow; and her virtue and integrity have conquered me for ever! My hopes have however been restrained by my fortune, having nothing to offer. The
strong

strong impulse which drew me towards her was resisted, but resisted in vain ; a dawn of reason however sustained me, and I had resolution enough to conceal my passion, and the fires which consumed me, lest their indulgence should prove prejudicial to the object of my love.—I resolved to be wretched—that Silvia might be happy !

Madame Vareuil listened to me with tears, and when I had done speaking, exclaimed—dear Floricourt!—how I admire you ! Your resolution—your candour—astonish me.—But I have more to say—your happiness is the wish of my heart, and would constitute mine. I should glory in having a son like you, and should love you equally with my daughter ; but alas ! our dreadful situation admits not of such an hope!—you know our law-suit is gone for ever—you know Silvia has nothing—and that your situation is not much better ! I acknowledged the truth of what she said, and confessed I had no further hope.

My

My daughter, nevertheless, continued Madame Vareuil, may want an establishment, and has now an advantageous offer. Can I—ought I—to reject it?—my daughter's interest being concerned—all the world would blame me for such a conduct. As for my own, I regard it not! I speak to you in confidence—I ask your advice—and consult you. Into what an embarrassment do you throw me! cried I, interrupting her—did you but know my anguish! Will Floricourt then refuse his counsel to a tender and afflicted mother, whose solicitude springs from her love for her child? You would have me pronounce against myself, Madam, exclaimed I! But I owe you my confidence, and submit to my duty, though with trembling—Silvia's happiness is dearer to me than my own—I cannot make her happy, another may have power to do so—ah! Madam, what would you have me say? You then advise me to accept the offer? rejoined Madame Vareuil. I ought to do so, cried I. Let Silvia be happy—that is enough. But your heart! what will become

come of that? said Madame Vareuil. It will be ready to break! replied I; but that shall not prevent my doing my duty. I have had resolution enough to be silent—to renounce all hope—but shall I have resolution enough to die?

You overwhelm me with grief (said Madame Vareuil, fetching a deep sigh) and I see that I overwhelm you also!—but Floricourt, I am a mother, and the happiness of my child is concerned in this affair!—advise me, then—my daughter loves you—how is she to be cured?—advise me! aid me! It must then be at the expence of all my soul holds dear, exclaimed I! Oh Madam, did you but know what I feel!—But I go!—absence—oh Heavens! am I then to banish myself for ever from what I value more than life! Cruel fortune!—never did I more strongly feel your baneful influence!

Saying these words, I rose from my seat, and traversed the room in extreme agitation, without speaking, while Madame Vareuil looked at me with fixed attention, and

at

at last said—I pity you, my dear Floricourt!—but what can I do? you relinquish all pretensions to my daughter from the noblest motive!—you advise me to accept of the proposal made her.—But how can I extract the dart that rankles in her heart?—advise me!—guide me in this important point!—I know the cruel anguish of being compelled to marry those we do not love, and have long since informed you that I had no predilection in favor of my first husband, and that I married him merely because it was the will of my parents. I cannot therefore think of compelling Silvia to marry against her inclinations, or of condemning her to the cruel alternative of perpetual tears or a dishonourable conduct. Assist—advise me—Floricourt! be yourself to the last.

How your confidence distresses me, cried I, with precipitation. I will fly—I will be gone!—cruel necessity compels me to this—and I will go, tho' I shudder at it! But my dear mother (suffer me still to call you by that tender name) continue to love me—remember

member Floricourt—and when he returns to you, after having given up all that his soul holds dear, receive him to your maternal arms; let him weep in your bosom, and give him that consolation which he cannot elsewhere find under the sun!

We now blended our sighs and tears, and a long silence succeeded this heart-rending scene. I threw myself into a chair, in a state of the utmost perturbation, and gave myself up for some time to a thousand tumultuous thoughts; but at length invoking reason, I fancied she was come to my aid, and thought I was perfectly master of myself. Silvia, however, entered soon after, and passion reassumed its empire.

Her eyes were red with weeping; her whole deportment was constrained; and her countenance palid. She looked at me for an instant; fetched a deep sigh, which she in vain endeavoured to stifle; and seating herself, took her work. My heart immediately took the alarm, and an impetuous transport seizing me all at once, I was on the point of expressing

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expressing my torments by cries of anguish; but making a strong effort to suppress my emotion, I rose from my seat with precipitation in order to retire, and meeting Bellon at the door, redoubled my haste to avoid him. When I entered my own apartment, my heart was agitated by a thousand conflicting passions, which the appearance of Bellon rendered scarce supportable. Impatience, rage, and jealousy, agitated me in turn, and I now forgot Silvia's happiness in order to remember my own misery and the anguish I felt at losing her.

I opened my door twenty times in the course of half an hour, to listen whether Bellon was about to take his leave; and finding all silent, was thrown into despair by knowing he was still in a place from which I wished him a thousand leagues off. I was frequently on the point of going down, and of entering Madame Vareuil's apartment, in order to speak to her and her daughter, tho' I had no determinate reason for so doing, and only wished to see them, without knowing

knowing what I had to say. I opened the door continually, in order to listen, and then shut it again in a rage, saying—will he never go?—will he stay there for ever?—then in a moment changing my tone, I cried, oh, Madame Vareuil! you know my anguish, and say you pity me! but you render me a witness of my rival's happiness! is this well? Silvia too—Silvia ought to have absented her happy lover for some time, out of compassion to me!—a little ill humour, petulance, or perverseness, might have done this! But I bemoan myself in vain; and am no longer an object worthy their regard!—Madame Vareuil has nothing but the interest of her daughter at heart, and Silvia only thinks of providing for her mother.

This idea suspended my agitations for some time; but love returned in all its power, and I exclaimed—will he never be gone!—what can be the meaning of this long visit? I passed two hours in this state of perturbation, and suffered perpetual torments—

ments—a thousand different and inexplicable feelings occupying my heart by turns, and clashing with each other.

I at length heard Bellon take his leave, and immediately descended. Silvia was weeping; and her mother was in a like situation. O my dear mother! said the former, deliver me from these importunities, or they will certainly kill me!—But you weep!—O that I could stop those tears!—Why is my heart so difficult to conquer?

I now approached; and she turned towards me, saying—is it you?—why do you come at this moment?—is it in order to discover my folly, and to make me blush at my weakness?—Cruel and dangerous man! applaud yourself for your victory, and triumph in your conquest!

I had thrown myself at her feet, and attempted to speak; but she would not let me. Hold that delusive tongue, cried she; it has already destroyed my peace—I have already heard too much!

Silvia! exclaimed I—and was going on—but she put her hand to my mouth, and said

said to her mother, prevent his speaking—
 desire him to be silent—I cannot bear it!
 She spoke this with an apparent and attractive wildness that heightened all her charms, and discovered, by a bewitching simplicity, an ardor of love that increased mine. I gazed at her some time with eyes suffused in tears, without speaking, and then turning to her mother, exclaimed—must I then lose her, Madam!—must she indeed be given to another!—But alas! I have promised!—cruel, barbarous promise! We now remained in a state of silent confusion, easier to be conceived than described. Madame Vareuil, however, at last interrupted it by saying, O Floricourt!—to which I answered, how have you resolved?—Bellon has but just left you—is my misery at hand?—is the day fixed? No! nor ever shall be! said Madame Vareuil.—I am not intimidated by poverty!—my only motive for urging this marriage was to provide for Silvia.—But she is averse, and I can no longer adopt a measure which might make you both miserable.—Bellon is gone,

and is never to return again. Bellon gone! exclaimed I—has he given up Silvia?—could he sustain her loss?—Oh, he never deserved her!

I now threw myself in transport at their feet, and implored their friendship and affection, without forming any hopes, or flattering myself with any future prospects of felicity! but nevertheless enjoying a serenity of soul I had long been a stranger to.

I had been impatiently waiting a great while for news from Vilson, from whom I had not heard since the fatal intelligence of the bankruptcy, though he promised, in his last letter, it should soon be followed by another. I had in the mean time written to him, stating my unhappy situation, and urging him to write to me, but received no answer.

On the day following that in which Bellon had taken his leave, I received a packet from my friend, in which he informed me that my fortune was not gone, and that I was in full possession of it. Having lost no
time

time in seeking out the bankrupt, Vilson's zeal and activity had enabled him at last to discover some traces of him, which pursuing closely, he found out at last that the bankrupt had taken refuge in a convent of monks at some distance from M—— and immediately went to him in spite of the obstacles raised against his seeing him.—Monster! said Vilson, the moment he saw him, you must either prepare to meet that justice which is the scourge of villains like you, or determine to give up the property of my friend, the unfortunate Floricourt!—return him the sum he placed in your hands or—— Sir (said the trembling wretch) that is not in my power: the confusion of my affairs, my heavy losses, and many strange events.—Do not think of imposing on me, interrupted Vilson, I am not to be taught that this pretended bankruptcy is only meant to augment your fortune and to defraud those who have placed their money in your hands! I know this to be fact; and will not quit you till I receive from your hands what is due to

my friend. If you pretend to hesitate I will have you immediately arrested!

The bankrupt now called for the assistance of the monks, but in vain; for Vilson (who had a friend in the superior) intimidated them by a relation of facts which spoke loudly against him, and proved the necessity of their giving him up, lest they should expose themselves to the world by protecting a villain. The wretch now finding he had no resource, assured Vilson (trembling) that he had conveyed all his property to Holland, and that if he would set him at liberty he would immediately reimburse his friend. Your word is not to be depended on, cried Vilson; you shall not stir from hence till you have sent orders to your correspondents in Holland; (which I shall instantly dispatch) and till the whole sum due to Floricourt is put into my hands.

Saying this, Vilson immediately compelled the bankrupt to write to his correspondent, in order to expedite the arrival of the draft in Paris, and its delivery to me. My friend concluded

concluded his letter by entreating me to give him the earliest possible intelligence of the payment of the money, as he should stay at the convent de —— till he heard from me.

This letter I instantly gave to Madame Vareuil; who, on reading it, exclaimed, Heaven be praised, my dear Floricourt! the clouds of ill fortune, which have so long encompassed you, begin to dispel, and you will still be happy! Silvia listened to what her mother said with delight, and looked at me with an air that indicated both pleasure and inquietude; while I snatched her hand with rapture, and exclaimed, Silvia! you shall now be happy!—and deserve to be so—for you can be contented with mediocrity!

The purest joy now reassumed its influence over us, and we became the happiest of beings. I soon received bills of exchange, payable at Paris, which were duly honoured, and I returned to Madame Vareuil with my little fortune. My dear Madam! said I, receive this small property as your own and that of your children; and taking her daughter's

ter's hand, and pressing it to my lips, added, —Silvia, we shall now be happy!—all our misfortunes are fled! I immediately acquainted my friend Vilson (to whom I was under such uncommon obligations) of my having received the money, and he soon set the bankrupt at liberty.

I was totally engrossed by my approaching nuptials, and the joy I felt at making Madame Vareuil happy in her declining years, when M. de St. Clair (whom Bellon had informed of his ill success) came to pay us a visit in order to plead his cause.

How has Bellon offended you? said he, the moment he entered?—he is a worthy young man—he loves Silvia with unbounded affection—he would have made her happy—and I gave myself credit for having backed his pretensions. My daughter's consent was however necessary in this case, replied Madame Vareuil, as she is the principal person concerned. Agreed! cried St. Clair—I am sorry for the obstacle—but as she cannot love him, we must think of this marriage no more,
and

and must look out for somebody else :—my intentions are always the same—they cannot alter. These ladies, Sir, said I, are very sensible of your favors, and acknowledge their obligations to you ; but Silvia has condescended to think of me for her husband, instead of Bellon, and the little fortune I possess will I hope be sufficient for our happiness. Reserve therefore your bounty for those who stand more in need of your assistance, and favor us only by your friendship, of which we flatter ourselves you will not find us unworthy.

Sir!—Sir!—replied St. Clair, you shall not so easily get the better of me!—I am determined!—I will be a father to this amiable creature!—you give me your consent, Madam, said he, addressing himself to Madame Vareuil. I will be her father!—I insist on being so!—and will give her a fortune!—I have an estate about twenty miles off, near a little town, that shall be hers. Nothing but a notary is wanting, Sir, replied I ; suffer us to decline this favor, and permit us

to purchase the estate. No, faith! cried St. Clair, with vehemence, that shall not be! I do not like to be contradicted, young man! you are not Silvia's husband yet—why would you then prevent my being of service to her?—I would be your friend, but you must not disapprove of what I purpose doing, especially as it is so reasonable.—I insist on settling the whole estate upon her, and I will have my way. I attempted to remonstrate, but he went on—Sir!—Sir!—said he, without attending to me, I hate compliments—I am rich, and my relations are so likewise.—I abound in superfluities—I have sacrificed too much to pleasure, and have done little good—You want to prevent my doing it now, when it is my duty to make amends for the error I have been guilty of; an error which I make no doubt but that you know.—Can you suppose this conduct of yours can be agreeable to me?—especially when I have reason to blush at what I have done?—I cannot rest till you have a better opinion of me—for what can be more humiliating to a
just

just man, than the consciousness of having acted a wrong part!— I know your history—I have been informed of your merit—and your behaviour makes me blush at my own!— my proceedings, Madame Vareuil, compleated your misfortunes—I did worse than your detestable brother in law, and seemed to act in concert with him.—My triumph will now be to torment him to the utmost by being of service to you—your child's estate joins to that where he generally resides; and he will be plunged into despair at seeing your happiness. He wished to see you ruined—he longed to make you miserable—revenge is sweet!

In vain did Madame Vareuil declare she sought for no revenge.—He went on—you are too good—I want to make the wretch burst with envy—he shall hear of it—he shall hear of my daughter's good fortune—that's enough. As for you, Monsieur de Floricourt, you are happy!—you have been of service to these ladies—I esteem you, and love every body that is like you—I have

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not been what is called virtuous—I am a man—I have had my frailties, and that perhaps more than another—but I think I may say with truth, that I never did evil intentionally, and when I committed a crime, I always sought to repair it to the utmost of my power. This is my apology. Perhaps you think I have need of it—the circumstance which brought us acquainted with each other is not of the most favorable kind to me.—But after all, I am not very bad—I cannot conceive why one should not speak of ones self as one really is, for there is no merit—we can never be good enough—you are from M——, by what you say—your name is not unknown to me—you were there acquainted with d’Erlet.

This name still made me shudder; but St. Clair perceived it not, and went on—That’s another monster ! cried he—I know a number of his bad actions—he wanted to be the ruin of you—was it not so ?—but let us have done with the bad, and think only of the good—we shall meet again, and that for life and death.

Saying

Saying these words, St. Clair left us full of astonishment at his generosity and the honest abruptness of his character, the former of which he carried to an excess by his liveliness and activity, which never gave his friends time to ask for his assistance. Early the next morning two porters, loaded with heavy trunks, asked for me, and after having deposited their burden, gave me a letter; it was from St. Clair, and contained the following words.

“ I send you these trifles, my son, because you are to espouse Silvia, who is the daughter of my choice. They are ornaments proper to adorn your wife—and my daughter—I charge you, by the rights which your gratitude gives me over you, not to say a word about these contemptible things.”

Astonished at the contents of this letter, I ran to Madame Vareuil, and desiring her to read it, exclaimed—what a wonderful character is this!—what generosity!—what nobility of soul!—’tis impossible to refuse favors urged in this manner!

The

The porters had already disappeared; and we found the trunks contained superb dresses, and diamonds of great value, which Silvia seemed highly delighted with; and when I had adorned her with the latter, appeared more gay and more satisfied with herself. Though this effect arose from her innocence, it afflicted me—Julia, thought I, would have taken no delight but in me—she would not have been thus pleased with trifles! I know not by what fatality it was, but the image of Julia still pursued me, and I still regretted her. In the presence of Silvia, I could not detach myself from the latter, and yet felt the superiority of the former. These oddities, and these caprices of the heart, I never could account for.

Two notaries came soon after, and told me their business was to draw up a contract of sale between Monsieur St. Clair and me, the former having sold me one of his estates: they added, they should soon read it to me, and if I had no objection to make, I had nothing to do but to sign.

As

As the estate yielded ten thousand livres a year, and as they understood I had paid three thousand francs for it, they gave me a receipt. 'Tis impossible to express my admiration and astonishment on this occasion! —I hesitated some time how to act, least I should, by accepting this benefaction, abuse the generosity of this extraordinary man. But St. Clair entered at this moment, and asked me in his usual rough manner, whether I had any objection to sign? Sir, said I, in the utmost embarrassment, how can you?—Peace! cried he, coming up to me, and whispering in my ear—you will for ever disoblige me if you speak—sign this moment, or I will never see you more—what!—do you hesitate because you think me unworthy of being a friend to a man of honor?—sign—or I am gone.

I could no longer resist. I signed; and was put in possession of the estate. But no words can describe my gratitude to the generous St. Clair, who immediately retired,
to

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to avoid the thanks which I in vain endeavoured to express.

A rapid change now taking place in my fortune, I defied all future events, and the day of my marriage being fixed, became the happiest of beings. Madame Vareuil and her daughter participated my joy, and the benevolent St. Clair took part in my satisfaction. But an event that plunged us into the deepest sorrow, was to precede and retard my nuptials.

Madame Vareuil, Silvia, and I, had passed a delightful evening together, conversing about our approaching marriage, and anticipating our future happiness. I tasted joys inexpressible; and Silvia was equally delighted. We fixed our eyes on each other with mutual satisfaction, and enjoyed the transport which the soul feels independant of the body. Madame Vareuil observed us with a calm delight, a tranquil satisfaction; and never withdrew her eyes from us but to turn them up to Heaven, in order to implore its protection and favor to her children.

Delicious

Delicious evening!—enchanting moment!—with what rapidity didst thou fly?—thou art recalled with transport!—and dwelt on with delight! even at this moment my faded imagination can scarcely represent a part of thy beauties!

I could not rend myself from Silvia, though it was growing late, and though Madame Vareuil was indisposed and wanted rest. I hesitated a great while; but at length collected resolution enough to take my leave—adieu, Madam, said I—to-morrow I shall be your son—to-morrow I shall be entitled to call you by the sacred name of mother—adieu, Silvia—dear Silvia! added I—to-morrow we shall be united—and never shall be separated more. She accompanied me to the door—I pressed her hand—and we parted.

When I returned to my own apartment, I gave myself up to the transport and delirium which my approaching happiness inspired; and seating myself in my elbow chair, remained there two hours, reflecting on Silvia

via and the felicity I was on the point of enjoying by being united to her. A secret inquietude however (which I could not account for) checked my satisfaction now and then, and my sleep, when I went to bed, was infested with dreams of horror!

I fancied I was near an altar with Silvia and her mother, and that I was on the point of taking oaths which were to bind me to the former for ever, when the day was suddenly obscured, dreadful darkness now surrounded us, and I could no longer perceive either Madame Vareuil, Silvia, or the priest who was to have united us. Darting lightnings indeed divided the shadows, and it was by their momentary glare alone, which came and vanished in an instant, that I discovered Silvia again. I seized her hand—I bound myself by the most solemn vows to love her for ever—She did the same by me—and the priest gave us his benediction. The lightnings now ceased for a time; but the darkness increased by degrees, and the flashes returned, accompanied by noise and thunder.

der. I fancied Silvia was now torn from my arms—that I went in pursuit of her—that a spectre opposed my passage, and fixing his eyes upon me, declared the hour of vengeance was at hand—I saw him no more—the darkness vanished—and gave place to day—I now thought myself in the midst of a forest, surrounded by dead bodies;—that a bloody sword was in my hand, and that a dying man lay at my feet, sinking beneath the wounds I had given him. I thought he raised his head—looked at me—sighed—bid me be content—and expired. Heavens!—cried I, (the agitation of my mind awakening me) what have I done!—what blood have I spilt!

I immediately darted out of bed, put on my morning gown, and endeavoured to compose myself. I heard a noise—it proceeded from Madame Vareuil's chamber—her door was opened—and I ran to open mine—Floricourt!—Floricourt!—cried Silvia—come, for pity's sake!

What is the matter? cried I, darting towards her with terror—Oh Floricourt!—
my

my mother!—my mother!—said Silvia—come and see, I flew to Madame Vareuil's chamber, and found her in bed, almost senseless. I made use of every possible means to recall her to life, and at last succeeded. She opened her eyes and spoke to me as follows:

Floricourt, said she in a faint tone of voice, I am very weak, and felt myself attacked by a burning fever and dreadful head ach when I came to bed; but thought it would go off. I was very unwilling to disturb Silvia; but finding myself dying, I at last made all the noise I could, and know not what has happened since. O Floricourt! your happiness is still deferred!—and I am the unhappy cause!—my strength decays apace—I feel approaching death—and never shall see you united to Silvia.—O Floricourt! I recommend my daughter to you; remember that your vows are already registered in Heaven—that I have ratified them—and that they are sacred! Ah! my dear mother! cried I—you have permitted me to call you by that endearing name—why will you thus cruelly

cruelly alarm yourself?—your constitution is still good—our attention, our unremitted zeal, —will overcome this indisposition—you will still live to bless us! I now left her to the care of Silvia and went in search of medical assistance.

As I dared not depend on any body but myself to call in a physician, I ran to his house with the utmost speed, and when I was there, intreated him to inform nobody but myself with the state of the patient, provided she was in danger. He attended Madame Vारेuil immediately; and after having studied her case some time, ordered a regimen. I accompanied him at his exit; and enquiring what was his opinion, received for answer, that she was very bad—she is not old, said he, but her constitution is immensely worn and broken, and indicates an age almost an hundred. She must have been deeply afflicted, and violently agitated—there is but little hopes of her—the sap of nature is exhausted—her body is dried and withered—the whole animal œconomy of her frame is
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in a state of dissolution—and if she has any affairs to settle let it be done speedily. I conjured him to attend her still; and returning to Madame Vareuil with a broken heart, endeavoured to find out the effect of her illness, and the state of her mind, by the indication of her countenance. She called me to her with a feeble voice, and intreated me to be comforted—I feel my malady is mortal, added she, and that I never shall recover—I deplore your anguish—and the embarrassment into which my death will throw you—especially as my religion differs from yours.

I entreated her to compose herself, and to form hopes of recovery.—As to her belief, I dropped a tear over it, concluding that she thought it was right. I knew this was an improper time to enter into a discussion on the subject—that nothing but a thorough conviction of the fallacy of our religion could justify a change—and that Madame Vareuil was far from thinking hers was faulty.

Her malady however increased, and every moment augmented her weakness. She felt
her

her rapid decline ; and exhorted Silvia and me, whom she conversed with to the last, to assume more courage, to dry our tears, and to settle matters with her.

I am about to finish my career, said she ; I have lived—and I must die. My consolation springs from leaving you happy. Floricourt, you will espouse my daughter—and Silvia, you will love Floricourt for ever—therefore think only of your approaching happiness—all the rest is nothing.

But this firmness was not in our power—and it was in vain that this exalted woman desired us to be comforted, and to think of nothing but our union.—The spectacle before our eyes banished the perspective of our future felicity, and in spite of the strongest possible attachment, we thought of nothing but her. Thus does sensibility, which is the purest source of enjoyment, produce the keenest grief ; and by exposing the feeling heart to all the shafts of affliction, render it vulnerable on every side, and subject it to pangs unknown to the generality of mankind.

We

We soon saw the dreaded moment approach which was to deprive us of Madame Vareuil for ever.—She existed but by halves—her senses were no longer affected—her organs ceased to act—and rapid and successive faintings assailed her, attended by convulsions. Her languishing body indeed seemed to struggle for life; but its struggles were only the weak efforts of one who vainly endeavours to fight against death; and the last movement of a machine on the point of dissolution. She opened her eyes—stretched her arms towards us—pronounced some unconnected words, which seemed the reverse of what she meant to utter, and discovered by her countenance the embarrassment and anguish of a dying person, who, in the full possession of his judgment and power of thought, finds his organs deranged, and that he is unable to express his meaning. She continued in this state twenty-four hours, having her eyes fixed on us, attending to what we said, and endeavouring to speak to us. But finding at length she was unable

to do so, she fell into a violent transport, during which she was obliged to be held in her bed, to prevent her throwing herself out of it. This was followed by a deep swoon, which lasted for some time. She at length fetched a deep sigh—came to herself—knew us again—mingled her tears with our's—took each of us by the hand—and in a feeble voice (frequently interrupted) spoke the following words, which remain deeply engraven on my memory.

My children, said she, you see me on the bed of death!—a compulsive force, which I am unable to resist, separates me from you!—I feel I have but a moment—and that I am going to appear before the tribunal of God! I have endeavoured to serve him—I yield my life into his hands—Oh, my children! love one another, and love me!—let your future conduct make me find favor before him who created me! Unfortunate!—afflicted!—torn to pieces during the half of my past life!—I hope an happy future; and trust I shall rejoin my husband. The soul

of

of Vareuil was pure. Youth may have mislead him—but he was just!—he was humane!—and if he failed in his religious duty, I trust in the clemency of God to pardon him!—his temptations were great, and his guilt pardonable! Love the great God!—endeavour to serve him!—and act as my children!—I implore thee, beneficent Being! added she, to pour thy choicest blessings on their heads—to crown them with thy goodness—and to make them worthy of thee!

She now commanded us to join our hands, and to repeat the vows which were to unite us for ever—and lifting up her arm to bless us in so doing, repeated a fervent prayer in a low voice. Her arm fell soon after—she had only strength to say, great God receive my soul!—and fetching a deep sigh, expired.

While we were venting the most bitter and piercing cries on this occasion, St. Clair (who had entered the house some time before) ran towards us, and dragging us away from the dead body of Madame Vareuil, exclaimed,

exclaimed, no noise—all is now over—she is gone—and is far happier than we!—retire!—you are not in a situation of mind at present to know what is necessary to be done—I shall therefore act for you—the religion of the deceased is unknown—mention not a word of it.

I endeavoured to stifle my sighs and suppress my tears, and was, together with Silvia, conducted to a retired chamber, where I shuddered at our mutual loss, and made no attempt to console her.

I shall not enter into a detail of what immediately followed the death of Madame Vareuil, and shall only say that the generous St Clair had her decently buried; our grief, which was so exquisite at first, and at the interment of the deceased, diminished by degrees, and was at length concentrated in ourselves.—Silvia wept—I wept in turn—and we both endeavoured to find support and consolation from each other. Sometimes restored to our former feelings, we gazed at each other, and interrupted the effusions of

our grief to declare our mutual affection, and to vow that we were each others consolation.

As Silvia was of a timid nature, and she feared being alone, I never quitted her, and I even prevailed on her (after repeated solicitations) to let me take up my abode in her apartment.—I was at her side during the day, and at night sat up in an elbow chair near her bed. I now no longer thought of the loss we had sustained, my whole attention being confined to Silvia, and the happiness I was to enjoy by possessing her—though I knew not when.

One evening, as I was sitting by her bedside, with a candle (which cast but a feeble light) burning in the chamber, I looked at Silvia, who was asleep, and who had accidentally thrown the sheet aside which covered her bosom—I felt my heart palpitate, and was on the point of approaching her, when I thought I heard a noise, and fancied it proceeded from Madame Vareuil's apartment. This instantly stopped my progress—I seated myself

myself again—I looked all around me—I started up—I ran to the door—opened it—and knew it led to the room where Madame Vareuil expired, and where every thing indicated a recent death. Her idea now came strongly into my mind. I have lost that excellent woman! exclaimed I, and was on the point of disturbing her present felicity, and making her repent having entrusted her daughter to my care—We lived under the same roof while she was alive—but must do so no longer, unless we are united.

Being struck with these reflections, I withdrew from Silvia's bed-side for the rest of the night, determining not to expose myself to the danger of blushing for my conduct; and was the next day interrogated by her with regard to the cause of my apparent melancholy. I trembled at the idea of avowing the cause of my embarrassment, lest she should withdraw herself from me for some time, and was studying for an evasive answer, when St. Clair entered and put an end to my inquietude.

Well, said he, how goes sorrow?—the best way is to have done with it—it is to no purpose—she is gone—and we are alone to be pitied! Mademoiselle, added he, addressing himself to Silvia, you must assume resolution—you are still in this house, and that is not proper; we must observe the rules of decorum—you cannot think for yourself—I will think for you—you must be married privately—you must go to your estate—I will accompany you—and every thing shall be in order—Silvia, you are my daughter, and I am your father; do you not agree to my proposal?—come, my dear children, let us take courage—let us be gone!

Awakened by this discourse, Silvia and I looked at each other. I took her hand—she blushed—and St. Clair exclaimed, that is right—you answer each other properly—rejoice, my children! I said nothing, added he, but I knew this was the part you ought to act—I have all the necessary dispensations from the Archbishop—you may complete the ceremony when you will—no compliments—

ments—the time must be fixed this evening—the hour midnight—my carriage shall be waiting at the church-door—we shall be at your estate to-morrow—we will sup together—and I will stay with you a few days—what do you say to this arrangement?

Silvia now seemed greatly embarrassed—while I embraced the Baron, returned him a thousand thanks, rejoiced in his friendly precipitation, and by my whole behaviour indicated my joy. The poor fellow, cried St. Clair, how pleased he is with me!—and you, Silvia, do you make any objections?—your father insists on a favorable answer. Silvia blushed again—I kissed her hand—she did not withdraw it from my lip—she looked consent—and the Baron, after surveying us some time with satisfaction, withdrew to prepare all things for the ceremony.

Silvia and I now made preparations for our journey, which were soon accomplished, and St. Clair came to sup with us. How long did this supper appear!—how ill did the tedious hours agree with my impatience!

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—I looked at my watch continually—I asked to see that of the Baron—twelve did not yet strike—I was out of patience—St. Clair smiled, and looked at me and Silvia with delight—and knowing that he was communicating happiness, enjoyed it himself.

I am sixty years of age, said he—I have been devoted to pleasure these forty years, and yet have never tasted it till now. Your felicity makes me happy!—I had no notion of so singular a satisfaction before—you must always be my friends—I could not forgive myself were I to think I had disgusted you by my conduct—What a fool was I not to marry when I was young—I should then have been happy in the woman of my choice, and should have tasted the felicity you now enjoy.

The long wished for moment at length arrived. We entered the church, and the witnesses were ready. How did my heart palpitate during the ceremony! I pressed the hand of Silvia as I held it in mine, and pronounced the charming *yes* which was to
unite

unite me to her with unbounded ardour, and heard the same uttered by her with inexpressible transport. It is done! cried I mentally (when the priest had blessed us) it is done! and I am united to Silvia for ever!—nothing can now separate us—her fate and mine are blended together, and happy days await us!

The Baron fixed his eyes upon us during the ceremony, and when it was ended, seemed intoxicated with joy. He laughed—he wept—he moved about his cane—he came towards us—he retired—he knew not what he did—and seemed by his behaviour to indicate that he was himself the bridegroom.

The moment we had signed, we stepped into the carriage, and post horses being prepared, set out on our journey. I was seated next to Silvia. I felt my heart palpitate with joy, and putting my hand round her waist, found hers was in unison with mine. As to the Baron, he knew not how to contain himself—he talked—he sung—he embraced each in turn—and knew not how to testify his joy. We at length arrived at the

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castle, without our having observed the distance of the way, and without my having paid any attention to the various beauties of the country through which we passed, or the charms of our present situation—my whole attention was confined to Silvia, and she alone occupied my thoughts.

We placed ourselves at table as soon as we arrived, and found each dish delicious; the satisfaction we enjoyed, and the pleasure we possessed, giving an additional flavour to every thing we tasted. The Baron however soon drew our attention towards himself by his lively sallies and discourse.

Behold, said he, this is the first marriage I have seen with pleasure!—be satisfied—let me have a child quick—it shall be named by me—I have none myself—my relations are rich—he shall be my heir—he shall be my grandson—I adopt him before hand—here's to his health—I think of nothing else.—His father and mother are happy—they have nothing to desire—they have nothing to do but to produce a son—a son—and that soon.

Full

by each other; our days rolled on in a delicious manner, and nothing could equal my happiness. Time however, without destroying my felicity, diminished the purity of it, and a constant familiarity made me discover blemishes in Silvia that rendered me uneasy. I found her capricious, ill humoured, and odd. I adored her still—but often reflected on the equanimity of Julia. She seemed to be too lively—too resentful—and too much attached to pleasure. These defects, which had escaped me during the first hours of intoxication, hurt me now, when the transports of passion had in some degree subsided.

New subjects of joy however soon dissipated my chagrin, and made me forget all. Silvia informed me she thought herself pregnant, and I rejoiced in the idea of becoming a father. The title charmed me. I anticipated the happy moment.—I formed conjectures of my child's future fate—of the sex it should be of—and found my love for Silvia increase.

The conjectures of Silvia were soon confirmed, and I acquainted St. Clair with the
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new species of happiness which attended me. He answered my letter immediately, and exhorted me with a warmth that rejoiced me, to take the utmost care both of the mother and of the child she was pregnant with, and expressed himself on the occasion in such lively terms, as to make it supposed that he was more interested in their welfare than myself. Five months after the receipt of this letter, he took post, and came himself to enquire after the health of Silvia, and to be convinced by his own eyes of her safety.

I would not lose a moment, said he, on his arrival. I will leave you no more! I am too much concerned in the welfare of my grandson. He must partake my happiness—he must be born in the midst of joy; he must live—he must be happy. The good Baron increased my joy; his projects of felicity for my future child being far beyond the most sanguine ones I had formed. He dwelt with transport on the idea of his birth—formed schemes with regard to his education—directed his future studies—his occupations and amusements—bounded over
a length

a length of years—married him at last—and fancied he saw one of his descendants. But at length recollecting his age—he stopped—’tis pity, said he, that I am old; I can now only hope to see him.—But let us turn from these funeral ideas; let us think of more joyful things.—Well, young mother, added he, how do you intend to manage your child? I insist on your having no wet nurse—I do not like them—you must suckle yourself—you must be a mother in all things—and not confine yourself to bringing children into the world.

I was enchanted by this question of the Baron’s, though I dared not propose Silvia’s suckling our future offspring herself, and waited with impatience for her answer. She took St. Clair by the hand, with an engaging smile, and told him if that depended on herself she had no other design than to be both mother and nurse! but my dear Floricourt, added she, it is necessary that you should be consulted; I was afraid of asking you the question? Of asking me the question! exclaimed I; could you doubt of my consent?—

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sent?—it was ever the wish of my heart, tho' I dared not mention it to you, much less insist upon it. Dear Silvia! you go beyond my wishes, and oblige me greatly in this point! This is all right! cried the Baron, clapping his hands; you were both of one mind I see, but did not understand one another. How lucky it was that I came to make you discover this secret!

Silvia's pregnancy however advanced, and she brought me a son. Our mutual joy was extreme, and that of the Baron fell not short of ours. Rejoicings were made, and my vassals partook of my joy, while the generous St Clair signalized himself on the occasion, and remained with us two months after. He was never easy but when he saw our son. He presided over the women who had charge of him, directed them in their management of him, and was continually finding fault. He condemned them for swaddling him too tight, for depriving him of liberty, for not putting him into his cradle properly, and for not preventing his crying;

proposal to my adversary to have it left to arbitration. Being for some time engrossed by this weighty concern, I was less attentive to Silvia than usual, embraced her with less ardour, and became gloomy and ill-humoured. I am naturally affectionate; but my sensibility being great, these unexpected troubles agitated and deranged me; and I became less inclined to overlook the caprices visible in Silvia. I proved so at dangerous moments. She was soured by my behaviour; and we had daily bickerings, to which we were equally sensible. In order to be revenged, she shunned me, and went more into company than she liked; while I, greatly chagrined at her dissipation, unjustly fancied that she was fond of the world. I avoided her in turn—expected concessions from her I had no right to demand—and afflicted myself in secret. I accused her of levity—of want of affection—recalled the image of Julia—and dwelt on it with regret.

The threatened law-suit was however set aside, and I ought to have been restored to tranquillity. But this was far from being
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the case. I had shunned Silvia—I had forgot she had lately engrossed all my attention—I applied myself to study—endeavoured to banish her remembrance—and felt a void that made me miserable. All our former assiduities and minute attentions to each other seemed now evaporated, and by an inconceivable oddity, though we still loved, we appeared quite unconcerned about each other. I only dwell on these minute particulars, in order to pave the way for a relation of the most fatal event of my life—an event which plunged a dagger into my breast, and entailed bitterness and anguish on the future days both of Silvia and myself.

During this state of chimera and inquietude, I received a letter from the Baron, who informed me he was ill and desired to see me. I communicated the contents of this letter to Silvia. She asked me if I intended to go?—and whether I purposed setting out immediately? It was my duty so to do—I felt the necessity of it—and yet this question

question surprized me ; and the tone of voice with which it was asked disgusted me. My intention was to prepare her for my departure by degrees, to soften what she might suffer by our separation ; and finding her so ready to part with me, conceived she wished me gone. This thought increased my inquietude. A thousand phantoms now presented themselves to my imagination ; spite realized them ; and I had the mean pride to suppress what I felt on the occasion. I told her, with an air of calmness and indifference, that my intention was to go directly, although I greatly regretted parting with her ; and she (then in a state of ill humour, which I endeavoured to encrease) answered that she was obliged to me.

Being incensed at her coldness, I made no answer, and immediately ordered preparations to be made for my journey. She shed tears at seeing me depart ; and I was senseless enough to think she only feigned regret, and that she was really rejoiced at my going. I cannot recall this circumstance, and my weakness

ness on the occasion, without bitter regret and tears of anguish.

On my arrival at Paris, I went to the Baron's hotel, and found him in bed, pale—weak—in the utmost danger—and surrounded by greedy relations. Ah! my friend! said he, the moment I entered, you come very opportunely—these beings about me vex me to the heart. Is it not a horrid thing to be thus infested in my dying moments, after having passed my whole life without their attendance? Your attentions and good offices are rather of the latest, continued he, turning towards them, and might have been spared. I should not then have suspected you of interested motives and should have perhaps thought of you in my will. But you come too late—my will is already made—and if you have a mind to pray for me, do—remember however I shall pay no expences—and if you chuse to put on mourning you must pay for it yourselves—so good night—good night!

In this manner did he discard his relations (who retired in confusion) seeming only to have

have waited for me in order to finish his will and make me witness of it. I remonstrated with him on the occasion, and endeavoured to soften him in their favor; but he would not hear me on the subject, and addressed me thus—Urge me no farther on this head!—'tis all in vain!—I was a younger brother—nobody then took notice of me—I went abroad—I made a fortune in the Indies—and came back rich.—They thought I had dishonoured their family by being a merchant—they shunned me—and now, when I am dying, they want to reap the fruits of my labour. Out upon it!—I will have nothing to say to them—I will punish their avarice—I will give them a lesson they much want.

He sent for notaries immediately, and dictated his last will; insisting on its being expressed in his own words, as he made a jest of their law terms and irksome repetitions—his expressions on the occasion being those of an upright man. Hurt and disgusted by the falsehood and injustice of his relations, he at first insisted on appointing
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me his sole legatee, after having directed some charitable distributions; but I prevailed on him to alter his determination, and to appoint me only his executor. His will therefore remained in its first state, and entitled his relations to his property; but he added a codicil, in which he declared it was through my intercession alone that he let it continue as it was, and that he bequeathed me a large sum of money as a legacy.

After these arrangements, he languished some days, preserving his gaiety and frankness to the last, and bitterly regretting (as he died in my arms) that I would not permit him to make my son his heir.

I sincerely regretted the loss of this worthy man, and immediately set about the execution of his will. I assembled all his relations, in order to acquaint them with it; and they came with reluctance, because they had no reason to suppose it would be in their favour. But when they were informed of it, they insisted on my accepting a considerable sum, exclusive of the legacy left me by my friend.

Having

Having settled this weighty matter, I made preparations to return home, where new misfortunes awaited me—misfortunes which I cannot recall without shuddering.

Silvia had some times written to me during my absence, and I had answered her letters with a warmth ill suited to the coldness with which we parted. I now acquainted her with the day of my departure from Paris, indicated that in which I was to see her, and informed her I intended meeting her at my estate. I set off accordingly, full of the pleasing idea of seeing and embracing Silvia again; my heart seeming to dilate in proportion as I proceeded on my journey, and the speed of the horses being inadequate to my impatience.

I am returning to Silvia! said I; to Silvia! whom I have never ceased to adore; and whose affection for me I am sure of! Her caprices—her ill humours—and the trifling disputes between us, which have cast a cloud over our felicity, are not to be regarded—they are not worthy of attention—I
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am as much to blame as she—for who is always the same?—who can boast of constant equanimity? why should I expect her to be more perfect than myself?—why do I not set her a pattern of perfection? Our obligations are equal, and I ought to set the example. Let me therefore watch over my own imperfections—my own inequalities of temper—and oppose serenity and sweetness against her discomposure and sourness—let me endear myself to her by this means, and become more worthy of her love!

Thus did I lay a scheme of happiness that delighted me; and in this state of mind did I arrive at my estate, where my domestics welcomed me with exclamations of joy! Amazed at Silvia's not appearing (who must have been informed of my arrival by the noise they made) I eagerly asked whether she was not yet come? and being answered no, I forgot all my resolutions of amendment, and all my new plan of happiness.—How! cried I mentally, not here! when I acquainted her with the day of my arrival!

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this is too much—her indifference is intolerable—after three months absence am I alone to feel? I now asked my domestics whether they had heard from her? and they answered yes—that she intended to have been there, but had been prevented by indisposition.

This wrought an immediate change in me. I now accused myself of cruelty, of accusing Silvia wrongfully, and immediately re-entering my post-chaise, flew to town, being under the most dreadful apprehensions with regard to her health, and full of fears lest my domestics had represented her illness in too favourable a light.

On my arrival at my house in town, I asked with the utmost impatience how Silvia did? and was answered that she was better, tho' she had had a violent head-ach all the morning; my servants added, that she was then gone out with two ladies who had called on her in the afternoon, and who had, in order to divert her, prevailed on her to dress and accompany them to a family where they were engaged to sup.

I was now very easy with regard to her health, but very much otherwise with regard to her indifference, my sensibility suggesting new torments to me. It was not Silvia's illness then, thought I, that prevented her coming to meet me at the place appointed—it was a party of pleasure!—what is become of those days when she preferred my company to every other?—when I solely engrossed her attention?—are they never to return!—O Silvia!—O Julia!—how very different are your characters. Thus did I afflict myself, and thus did I draw parallels unfavourable to Silvia.

Deeply engrossed by these painful ideas, and fearing lest my domestics should observe my state of mind, I said I was ill, and shut myself up in my apartment. Here I gave myself up to the most melancholy reflections, dwelling continually on what gave me pain, and rejecting every idea that tended to exculpate Silvia. This conduct of hers, said I, proceeds from a levity—a weakness of character—an imbecility of mind—that
knows

knows not how to resist what is wrong, and yields to every impulse.

Thus was I agitated all night; while Silvia, who returned home very late, was greatly surprized at my arrival, and much affected by my coming there so soon, on hearing of her indisposition.

I rose early the next day; but saw nothing of Silvia. This was another offence. I forgot she had been up late, and that she had need of rest; and fancied, through the urgency of passion, that her being invisible so long sprung from her indifference to me.

I attended her however at her rising, and found her lovely to a degree—her air of languor giving her new charms, at least in my opinion. I forgot all the unfavourable ideas I had formed of her, felt that I adored her, and thought that she must be innocent. She made apologies for her conduct which I answered by my caresses, and she soon ceased to make excuses in order to return them. We now for some time enjoyed a pure, serene, and tranquil pleasure, during which I

applauded my own conduct, and formed a fixed resolution of making our happiness lasting; but a new caprice prevented the execution of this scheme, and made me forget my resolution. My former troubles now returned to my remembrance—I relapsed into gloom—and my ill humour became insupportable. I insensibly grew cold in my addresses to Silvia; and as she seemed to be unmoved at my indifference, my gloom redoubled. During this period, I went frequently to my estate in the country, my fullness daily increased, and ill humour became habitual to me.

Silvia being with me during these excursions, I rose early one morning in order to enjoy the freshness of the air and admire the beauties of the rising day; but I had not gone far from my own house, before I perceived a man escape from a gallery which communicated with my wife's apartment. I at first fancied it was one of my people. But the precipitation of his flight, and the haste he made to elude my observation, soon convinced

convinced me that he must be a stranger. A thousand fatal ideas now presenting themselves to my imagination, I plunged into the park in order to indulge them: but reason coming to my assistance, I rejected them all; and placing a confidence in Silvia, became tranquil.

Three days after, however, I received an anonymous letter, which informed me that the conduct of my wife had disgusted all my friends, that her former secret intrigues would soon be brought to light, and that I ought to take proper steps on the occasion.

This cruel epistle, though I despised it, rent my heart to pieces. What can Silvia have done, said I, to create such suspicions? What irregularities—what follies—can she have been guilty of?—true or false, this intelligence cuts me to the soul, and cannot but prove my misfortune. I now ruminated on Silvia's character; I recalled the observations I had formerly made with regard to it; I knew her sensibility was great; that she had a taste for pleasure; and that she

possessed a softness of soul that would render the perseverance and importunities of an urgent lover dangerous. Nor did our present mode of life (though our apartments were not separated) tend to my consolation. My mind was therefore in a state of confusion; and many subsequent letters which I soon after received on the same disagreeable subject, increased my grief, and prepared my heart for the fatal event which was to follow.

One evening, when Silvia had appeared more dejected than usual, had complained of being ill, and had at my desire, though unwillingly, retired to rest sooner than ordinary, a man came to my door, and said he was sent by one of my friends in order to deliver me a letter with the utmost expedition. This letter I immediately opened; and found it contained an urgent request that I would instantly come to town, in order to be informed of an unheard of scheme which was in agitation—a scheme that deeply concerned me, and which it was absolutely
necessary

necessary to put an end to that very night. The person who wrote the letter added, that I should not be detained above an hour—that the motive of his pressing me to come at such an unseasonable hour was owing to his being obliged to set out for Paris at break of day, and that Monsieur de M—— waited for me with the greatest impatience.

I knew not at first what to think of this letter: but at length concluded (knowing Monsieur de M—— was a wise and reflecting man) that the affair must be of consequence, as he interested himself in it, and had me written to on the subject. This being the case, I hesitated no longer; but immediately set out with some of my people on a journey that only lasted two hours.

When I arrived at the house of Monsieur de M——, I found every thing still; and knocking several times very loudly at the door, was answered by a domestic, that Monsieur de M——, whom I asked for, and who had been so urgent with me to attend him, had been at one of his estates

three days. What was I now to conjecture? what was I to understand by the letter that had been sent me? Was it a trick that had been played me?—a device to torment and afflict me? I knew not what to think. I turned my horse's bridle with a secret grief, was agitated by an emotion I could not explain, and pursued my journey homewards full speed. Day-light was at hand—I cast my eyes on all sides—I could discern surrounding objects—and at length, approaching my castle, saw a man take horse at a small distance from it, and gallop off full speed. A sort of tremor seized me at the instant, tho' I had no thoughts of pursuing him; and on entering my castle, I withdrew to a chamber adjacent to that of Silvia, for fear of disturbing her; and wishing to be alone, gave myself up to the most painful reflections.

I soon after heard a noise in my wife's apartment; and going thither in haste, found her sitting up in bed in the greatest disorder. The moment she perceived me, she screamed
out

out, almost distracted, and immediately after sunk into a state bordering on total insensibility. I did all in my power to succour, soothe, and comfort her; but she rejected all my assiduities with affright; and shedding tears, intreated me to withdraw, and leave her alone. Seeing my presence was a burden to her, and that I only tormented, fatigued, and oppressed her by my stay, I left her; but in a state of mind impossible to be described. I reflected with anguish on what had just passed—I formed conjectures with regard to the letter sent me by Monsieur de M—, I endeavoured to find out who the man could be whom I had seen so near my castle; and wished to know the cause of his galloping away with so much haste. What can be the cause, said I, of Silvia's present situation? Why does she turn pale?—why does she tremble, and reject my embraces? Is it because I am hated—betrayed—and reserved for misfortune and disgrace?

Confused emotions of jealousy now seized me and tore my heart to pieces, though I

was ignorant of the cause; and every thing conspired to increase my horror. Silvia neither appeared at dinner nor supper; and when I enquired after her, I was informed that she had shut herself up in her apartment, and had given orders to be left alone.

I entered my own apartment, overwhelmed with grief, and fatigued to death by the emotions of mind I had suffered during the preceding day and night, and feeling all my faculties benumbed as it were, sunk into a deep sleep. Grief, when it is extreme, rends the heart at first, but in the end produces heaviness and languor; nature seeming by this effort to repair her exhausted strength, and to prepare herself for new exertions. My sleep, usually short and interrupted, by an inquietude natural to me, was now of long duration—I waked not till very late the next day, and when I did so, was a great while in recollecting the croud of ideas which had caused me so much pain. The springs of my soul seemed to have been broken; and I remained in a state
of

of non-existence a whole hour, similar to a man who is neither asleep nor awake; and when I came to myself, it was only by the unfolding of certain ideas that ceased to be confused. A sigh seemed to ease my heart of a burden which oppressed it, and my tears flowed spontaneously, without being excited by any determinate cause. I returned to my faculties by slow degrees—felt I was unfortunate—and afflicted myself still more.

I had not seen Silvia since the morning of the preceding day, nor did I wish to see her till I had cleared my mind of the fears and thoughts which disturbed me; but wanting to know she did, I rung the bell. A domestic entered; I asked him how his lady did? he answered, that he knew not; and added, that she had supped very slightly the evening before, had locked herself up in her apartment immediately after, and had not rung her bell since that time.

What can be the motive of this conduct? exclaimed I, the moment I had sent away the domestic; what can be the meaning of Silvia's

via's love of solitude? Heavens!—perhaps she is guilty!—perhaps she shuns my presence lest my looks should accuse her of guilt!—yet I adored this ungrateful traitress!—I would have sacrificed my life to serve her!—and was more concerned about her happiness than my own!

My jealousy now realizing all the fears suggested to it by my imagination, I cherished them with avidity, and catching at every thing that could criminate Silvia, recalled the anonymous letters which had been written to me against her. Oh, Madame Vareuil! cried I (then in a paroxysm of rage) could you have thought it?—could you have conceived that I should ever have been reduced to this horrid state by Silvia?—could you have supposed that Silvia would have proved false?

This day proved as dreadful as the former. I was continually tormented by a variety of distracting thoughts and conflicting passions—one moment condemning Silvia without mercy, loading her with reproaches,
saying

saying the bitterest things against her that rage and fury could suggest—and the next palliating her offence, justifying her conduct, condemning myself, and bursting into tears. Thus did I pass the day; and at the approach of night resolved to come to an explanation. I dreaded it, 'tis true—but I adored Silvia;—and thought that the confession of her crime, her remorse, and contrition, would more than satisfy me. I therefore quitted my apartment, and asked for Silvia?—but was answered, that she had neither called nor rung her bell since I had enquired after her last. I now forgot my former scheme, sunk into the deepest melancholy, and thought of nothing but the cruel indifference which could urge Silvia to pass whole days without either seeing or enquiring after me. I closed not my eyes that night; but falling asleep the next morning, had the following dream.

I thought Silvia was torn from me by an hideous phantom, which afterwards returned to me again without her, and menaced,
laughed

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laughed at, and insulted me. I thought I darted towards it, pierced it with many wounds, saw it fall at my feet, and heard it utter words and groans that penetrated my soul.

I awoke in a fright—my heart being chilled with terror, and my body bedewed with a cold sweat. I in vain endeavoured to banish the horrid phantom and terrible dream; it pursued me through the day, and every thing, and every hour, encreased my horror. The sun went down without my observing it, and when the evening came, Silvia appeared not. Her bell had not been rung—my servants were uneasy—I became so myself—I condemned their imprudent obedience—I feared she might be ill and want assistance—I darted towards her apartment—I knocked violently at her door—no answer—my cries were vain—I burst the door open—no Silvia to be found!—I bid my people fly into the park—the gardens—the surrounding country—and remained at home alone in a state of mind that baffles all description.

EFFECTS OF THE PASSIONS. III

scription. I turned my eyes on all sides—I missed some of the apparel my wife usually wore—I saw her secrétaire open—I approached it—and perceived a letter directed to Monsieur Floricourt—and opening it hastily, read the following words:

“ I am no longer worthy of your regard !—A fatal event !—a cruel outrage ! an unheard of attempt !—covers me with confusion, and renders me detestable in my own eyes ! Criminal without intention—attached to you beyond measure—and innocent in the ground of my heart—I hope for divine mercy !—I was capricious—I made you uneasy—your affection for me is extinct—and you will never regret my absence !—Adieu !”

I could not sustain this last stroke. I fell prostrate on the floor, and only recovered my senses to feel new pangs and tortures. Their remembrance is scarce supportable at this moment, and I have need of all my resolution to pursue and finish this history.

BOOK

B O O K T H E S I X T H.

I Cannot think, without shuddering, on the state I was in at reading this letter. Silvia was gone—perhaps for ever!—she accused herself of something—she blushed at some transgression—she was then guilty—she was false! My resolution forsook me—I fell as I have before described—and when I returned to my senses, nothing could calm my agitation; my soul seeming to be oppressed by a weight of woe which it was unable to sustain, and to be incapable of reason, consolation, or repose. I quitted the bed on which I had been laid—I traversed the room—called on Silvia—put forth cries of anguish—and acted the part of a madman. I seized my sword, and was going to plunge it into my heart; but my domestics, seeing my distraction, prevented me, and conveyed
that

that and every other implement of mischief from me.

Three days did I remain in this state; detesting my existence, accusing heaven of injustice, and cursing the fatal moment in which I first saw Silvia. Oh, Madame Vareuil! exclaimed I—behold the daughter you adored!—a daughter for whom you have suffered such inquietudes! You brought her up with care; you thought she would make me amends for the trifling services I had been able to render you! Horrid recompense!—false, ungrateful Silvia! Oh! Madame Vareuil!—you are happy!—you have left this world!—oh! had you lived, she would have embittered your days, she would have tormented and distracted you! O Julia!—virtuous Julia! you would not have acted thus!—your soul was formed for love and virtue!—look down upon me—look down upon the man whom you once honoured with your affection, and pity the foolish frailty which induced him to love another! You was the only woman
formed

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formed to make me happy ! You was accustomed to subdue yourself—to regulate your conduct according to the will of others ; and your equanimity and sweetness would have made me completely blest !

Thus did I run on, and in this manner did I pass whole days and nights ; the latter of which being tinged by a deeper gloom of horror, the moment I closed my eyes, from excessive fatigue of mind, and when the power of sleep triumphed over my affliction, funeral images presented themselves to my imagination, and frightful phantoms haunted me thro' the night.

I once fancied I saw Julia approach, and upbraid me (weeping) for having forsaken her—that she afterwards pitied me—that she wiped away my tears—that she threw herself into my arms, and said—do not weep, Floricourt ! for I am with you. I then thought Silvia appeared—that she darted a menacing look at Julia—that she seized a poniard, and plunged it with fury into her breast.

I awoke

I awoke in terror! and my imagination being strongly impressed by what had passed in my dream, I extended my arms, in order to seek for them both. In these fits of grief and despair did I pass two months; and then shutting up my sorrows in my own breast, I rendered them more durable. I now thought of nothing but my afflictions. I disregarded all external objects, paid no attention to what passed, and thinking I was born only to suffer, made no use of my senses. I heard, without understanding; I saw, without observing; and my mind being totally engrossed by my troubles, and my imagination bewildered in a maze of darkness, I could scarce discern a gleam of light.

Why was I born? exclaimed I at times, and why do I still live? my life has been nothing but a continual scene of wretchedness or torment! The sword which proved my father's death robbed me also of a mother. I was snatched from my cradle by an affectionate uncle, and afterwards proved the cause
of

of his misfortunes. An ardent and unhappy passion embittered the first years of my manhood, and Julia!—Julia!—proved the victim of it! I was the cause of her death; I conveyed her to the tomb; and every one I loved has suffered torments! What were those of my venerable uncle during the last part of his life! Were they not the cause of his death, and of conducting his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave! What were those of Madame Vareuil? Thro' what a series of terrible events did she pass! Her husband lived the chief part of his life in torments, and his daughter was to have constituted my happiness. Happiness!—it is no where to be found!—it is not to be sought for on earth!—all those who inhabit this globe are either unfortunate or wicked.—Life is an horrible state—non existence is preferable to it!—All human beings are withered either by errors, vices, or crimes, of which they are in turn either the authors or victims. What is man? and why does he exist?—to vegetate—to live a few years—to suffer himself

self to be the cause of others sufferings—and then to die! Such is his destiny—and that he must fulfill; for he has no power of changing the decree of Fate. What do I say? There is one whom every man is master of—himself! it was not at our option either to chuse life or non existence; but it is in our power to die! Compassionate nature seems to have left us this last resource, in case our misfortunes should prove insupportable.

This idea, which arose from my situation, increased my darkness; and by increasing it quieted my mind. I now saw a prospect of peace—the only peace I could know; and in proportion as my reflections took this turn, I became tranquil and composed. My soul seemed satisfied. The wounds of my heart began to close. And as I found this delightful calm growing upon me, I exclaimed—I see the port of peace!—the only asylum that is left me!—and that asylum is death!—Nature shrinks not from it—she urges me to take this step—and those who
are

are against it, are happy in the enjoyment of pleasure, abundance, and peace!—It is easy for them to talk of resisting misfortunes, and to say it is nobler to live than to die. But were they in my situation, were they torn to pieces as I am—they would soon change their opinion!—they would look on death as a deep sleep—an happy asylum—a pleasing gaol—to which all mankind are hastening—tho' some arrive at it sooner than others!—And what prevents my going directly?—what prevents my abridging the span of my existence, and anticipating a moment which must arrive at last?

Plunged into these reflections, I resolved to die; and my impatience admitting of no delay, I rushed into my own apartment, seized my sword, and darted towards a solitary place in my park, where I intended to execute my purpose.

At length, said I, (as I advanced with hasty strides) the career of my misfortunes are almost at an end—I shall soon put a period to a life which has only been marked with

with woe—a life which is hateful to me—a life in which there is nothing worthy my regard.

Being come to the spot where I resolved to die, I drew my sword. I rested its pommel on the ground. I examined its point with a secret satisfaction, and was preparing to fall upon it, when I heard a scream. I turned my head—my sword fell—and I perceived a woman coming towards me. Oh Heavens! exclaimed I, my intention is discovered—my purpose is known—and my scheme will be prevented, unless I make haste! 'Tis folly to delay! Have I not lost all? Is there any thing in life worthy my attention? Saying these words, I stooped to recover my sword—I fixed it as before—and was going to execute my purpose, when mechanically casting my bewildered looks on the woman who was running towards me, I perceived she was my son's nurse, and that she held him in her arms. He extended his little hands towards me—he looked at me with affection—and called me father! My sword

sword dropped a second time—the cloud which had obscured my reason vanished by degrees—and a sigh escaped me. I have not lost all! cried I, (snatching my son from his nurse) you are still left to make life supportable!—you still exist! and I ought to live for your sake!—nature requires this duty of me!—to fail in it were a crime!—How has my mind been bewildered!—dear child—thou hast lost thy mother!—She has left me—she has abandoned thee—and I was mad enough to think of abandoning thee also!—alas! poor child what would have become of thee?—thrown into a wide world, where wouldest thou have found a friend, and who would have made thee amends for the loss of thy parents? Thy mother is gone—gone for ever—and I must supply her place—I must press thee to my breast with parental tenderness, and make thee amends for thy heavy loss!

Thus did I pour forth the effusions of my heart; seeming like a man just awakening out of a deep sleep and wondering at the horror

horror of his dreams. This was the first moment that I had thought of my son, since the absence of my wife. I now trembled at the project I had formed.—I looked at my sword with terror—and being still diffident of myself, carried my son far from the fatal spot where I intended to have executed my horrid purpose, and to commence his misfortunes by putting a period to my own.

At the end of some years, it became necessary to think of my son's education; and my whole soul was engaged in this business. I felt the joy of being a father; I thought my son made me amends for my sufferings as an husband; and my reflections changed their object—Thus does liberal nature dispense her good and evil with a just and equal hand, always making retribution for what she has robbed us of. The presence of my son, and his innocent caresses softened the anguish I felt at the remembrance of Silvia; and I endeavoured to forget her, in order only to remember him. I pressed him in my arms; I called him my consolation;

and said he must make me amends for the loss of his mother. I must live for your sake, said I; my whole attention shall be employed in making you happy; and I expect you will in return endeavour to make the remainder of my life tranquil.

Thus did I live for some time, seeking solitude, shunning society, and giving myself up to the recollection of my misfortunes. I felt a secret pleasure, a melancholy delight, in their contemplation; and rejoiced in being alone, that I might vent my sorrows without interruption.

My neighbours and my acquaintance, whom I avoided, laughed at the gloom which possessed me, and the manner in which I lived. They knew my wife had left me—they made themselves merry at my expence—and I was sometimes classed with those husbands whose wives had proved false. Such is the disposition of men, and such is their insensibility with regard to the sufferings of others, they make a jest of their situation, ridicule their misfortunes, and laugh

laugh at instead of pity them. To my other weaknesses, I added that of acutely feeling their bon mots; and therefore resolved to quit a place where I was subject to the intrusion of unfeeling beings, who visited me on purpose to be witnesses of my unhappiness. I had still a further reason for my aversion to this estate. It daily and hourly reminded me of Silvia; of the happy days I had once spent with her; and of the torments I had felt at her loss. I wished to retire to some distant province—to live sequestered—to shun the world—to hide my shame—and be unknown.

The estate of Floricourt, where I was born, and which had been torn from my family at my father's death, being at this time on sale, Vilson informed me of it, and intreated me to become a purchaser. I readily yielded to his solicitations. I sold the estate which was the gift of the generous St. Clair, and became proprietor of that of my ancestors. I repaired, improved, and beautified it; and was unhappy still.

My son nevertheless grew in stature. He seemed inclined to virtue; and I endeavoured to strengthen his good dispositions. Seven years had rolled away; he was now almost ten; and the time was come when masters were necessary, and parental documents were insufficient. I therefore sent him to college, the uneasiness of my mind not permitting me to direct his studies; and I remained alone, without perceiving that any change had been wrought in my favor by time, or feeling any diminution of my affliction.

My estate was charmingly situated. The air was pure—the prospect delightful—and every sense was gratified. On one side of it was an extensive plain, well cultivated, bounded by the horizon, watered by lakes and rivers, and surrounded by woods and fruit-trees. On the other, rose hills of various sizes, covered by villages, woods, vineyards, and trees of all sorts, which formed together a beautiful display of nature.

These objects, so pleasing to a mind at ease, had no effect on me. They struck
my

my sight indeed, but conveyed no pleasure to my soul, where the poisonous dart of trouble still remained. I often quitted this delightful prospect, to wander through the most solitary and gloomy places of a forest contiguous to my park, where I indulged my melancholy reflections, and where I sometimes formed vain hopes. False images!—children of a disturbed imagination!—which only flatter to deceive—you afforded me no consolation! What had I to expect? if I ever found Silvia again, could I receive her to my arms? could I extract the fatal dart which rankled in my breast? and could I be happy with her after she had avowed her guilt?

These baneful reflections succeeded each other with the utmost rapidity, and overcame the vague desires of my heart, which still panted after Silvia, and still found her necessary to its happiness.

All is now over! said I; no hope remains for me!—and even wishes are denied me!

Love betrayed, offended honour, and delicacy of sentiment, form a barrier between Silvia and me which can never be removed! Nothing can repair her infidelity, or make atonement for her guilt!—her remorse would be ineffectual—her tears would be vain—and I could never return to her arms without being pursued by the cruel recollection of their being contaminated. Her tenderness for me, I should always suspect—her caresses would be poison—and the remembrance of her infidelity would never be effaced.

One day, when I was involved in these horrid reflections, and was indulging the most gloomy ideas, I struck deep into the forest which was my ordinary walk, and wandered along its windings and bye paths. Trees, that counted ages, and whose tops seemed to reach the skies, surrounded me, and their interwoven branches formed an impenetrable shade—a shade that suited the solemn temper of my mind, and pleased my dark imagination. I was deep in thought,
when

when a sudden shuddering seized me.—Pre-sentiments have long been disregarded, and looked on as chimeras ; yet I will venture to say, that I never felt a joy or knew a sorrow but what was previously communicated to my soul by this mysterious intelligence.

What can this shuddering mean? exclaimed I. Can I have any misfortunes yet to come? I had no sooner said these words, than piercing cries assailed me. I turned my eyes towards the place from whence I thought they proceeded, and saw a carriage, through the wood, which moved with all the velocity that the roughness of the road would admit. The cries were repeated—I advanced towards the spot—and plainly discovered a coach and six, in which a female was struggling in the arms of a man. Knowing it was impossible to come up with the carriage, and having my fusée accidentally with me, I fired, and killed one of the horses. The coach consequently stopped—the coachman and postillion fled,

—and the man who accompanied the lady being intimidated by what had happened, made his escape, though I know not by what means; all I could learn being that he had looked at me through a thick copse, without saying a word.

I thought not of pursuing these wretches, the young lady in the coach exciting all my attention, and requiring all my care. Oh Sir, cried she, in terror, are you indeed my preserver? and have I nothing to fear from you?—oh! let us fly—let us fly to some place of safety—before the villainous servants you have dispersed, and who are in search of their master, return with him!—Let us be gone—let us not lose a moment—they will soon be here—oh save me—save me—finish the good work you have begun!

Saying these words, she threw herself into my arms, and I led her towards my castle. Nothing however could quiet her fears. She looked behind her continually; and hastening her steps every minute, cried
out—

out—I am afraid they are coming!—I think I see the monster!—the cruel ravisher!—the base wretch who has torn me from all I love!—What will my husband think when he finds I am gone!—Oh, Sir! are we near the place of your abode?—shall I find safety there?—are you sure you shall be able to defend me against this monster!—this savage!—my God!—oh, Sir! let us walk quicker!

As she rather flew than walked, I followed her with difficulty; and when we arrived at my castle, she cried out—I am no longer in fear—but I am dying! The conflict she had sustained, the agonies she had suffered, and the efforts she had made, being too much for her strength, she now felt their effects, and fell senseless on the floor.

I did all in my power to recall her to life. But finding she still remained insensible, I ordered my female servants to undress and put her to bed, and sent for a surgeon. I had the magistrate of the district informed of what had happened, and he attended at

the place where we had left the coach ; but nothing was visible there, except the horse I had killed. He afterwards came to my castle, to write down my depositions, and those of the lady concerned in this affair. But she still remained insensible ; and the surgeon, who had instantly attended her, and who had exerted all his skill to reanimate her, feared she was past recovery, and that her spirits had been too much exhausted to admit of any hopes of her life.

At the end of nine hours, however, she fetched a deep sigh ; and the attentions to her being redoubled by those who sat up with her all night, she became sensible in the morning. She opened her eyes ; she cast them on every object around her with affright, and cried—where am I?—am I conducted hither by the monster whom I detest?—the savage whom I reprobate? and then becoming delirious, she uttered many incoherent things ; by which I could however discover that she was but lately married, and that she loved her husband with the utmost

most fondness. After this, a violent transport seized her—she became outrageous—she wanted to dart out of the window—and was obliged to be held in her bed. Towards the evening, however, she grew calm; and the surgeon, who constantly attended her, conceived hopes of her the next day, tho' he ordered her not to speak, except to answer his interrogatories with regard to the state of her health. She was kept as quiet as possible; and was assured that the moment her health was re-established she should be safely conveyed to the place where she wished to be, and that she need be under no apprehension, or dread of danger. These assurances gave her courage. She seemed almost satisfied; became tranquil; and was soon in a fair way of recovery.

Being made easy with regard to the life of this amiable young creature, I returned to my usual occupations and accustomed walks; contenting myself with inquiries about her every morning and night. This extraordinary event, by adding to the gloom
of

of my ideas, rendered me more solitary than ever. I wandered over the place where this strange adventure had happened with a troubled mind, and reflected as I went on the strange fate of human beings, who seemed born either to be unfortunate or criminal.

I was however one day drawn out of these meditations by a man advanced in life, who came towards me saying—I am not deceived—it is Floricourt—he always crosses my paths—he obstructs all my purposes—and frustrates my designs. Stop, Floricourt, added he, I have been in search of you long—we are now alone—I will revenge the ill offices you have done me—and nothing shall now preserve you from my rage!

This rencontre and this address astonished me. Are you not mistaken, cried I? (not knowing the man) is it really me against whom you are so much enraged?—what injury have I ever done you? You shall be informed of that, replied he, by
the

the point of my sword—have done with talking—draw, and defend yourself.

Saying this, he darted towards me sword in hand. But as I was totally unacquainted with the man, and thought he was under a mistake, and blinded by rage, I parried his thrust, and said coldly—what is the meaning of all this?—I fear not your sword—yet want to know the cause of this assault—if you have injured me, I pardon you—and if I have offended you, I will repair the injury. That I have done you, is irreparable, interrupted he—and that you have done me, I will never forgive—you have prevented my design—you have prevented my carrying off a woman I had in my power—you have disconcerted my scheme—you have stopped my progress—and I will never forgive you!—Draw therefore, and think not of evading my purpose.—The faithful domestic whom I intrusted with this affair, and who concealed himself in this forest, has watched your steps—has followed you to your abode—and has acquainted me with the place where

where you usually walk. I have waited for you these five days—I have found you at last—and you cannot now escape my vengeance!

Blind man! exclaimed I, you excite my pity and compassion!—you wish to put an end to my life, but you are under the greatest obligation to me, for I have prevented your committing a crime which would have made you tremble, and would have caused you the bitterest remorse—you have already done enough—the stranger is dying—she will perhaps to-morrow be no more; and you will be the cause of her death!

If she dies, replied he, my rival will have no reason to triumph in the ill success of my enterprize, and I am happy in that idea.—But you, who have torn from me the gratification I proposed; who have robbed me of the woman I still wish to possess, I can never forgive, and want to sacrifice. Base wretch! exclaimed I, I despise you too much to accept your challenge. Honour forbids my dipping my hands in your blood. I give you up to divine justice, and defy
your

your threats. You know you are in my power (holding his arms, which I had never quitted since his first assault, and which he in vain endeavoured to disengage) you know you cannot escape from my grasp; therefore confess you are wrong, and blush at your conduct.

All you say is useless! cried he, (foaming at the mouth with rage).—Let go my arms, or take advantage of your superiority and pierce me to the heart!—I am your mortal enemy!—your bane!—Did you but know me, I should already be no more!

Tho' these last words strongly affected me, I still hesitated; and he cried, strike! I am the man who has brought disgrace and dishonour upon you!—I am the man who defiled your bed, and planted thorns in your bosom! Traitor! exclaimed I, (at this moment transported with rage, and almost deprived of my senses) this is too much!—tremble at the effects of my vengeance, and put yourself immediately on your defence!

I let

I let go his arms; I drew my sword; and attacked him with great fury; and he opposed me with equal violence. Our combat admitted not of long duration. He received two deadly wounds; he fell at my feet; and (my rage subsiding on the instant) I felt nothing but horror.

You are revenged, said he; fortune is in your favour, and I am a dead man. I hope not, replied I, trembling; I hope your life may be yet preserved. Saying these words, I tore his shirt, and binding up his wounds, had him conveyed to an adjacent house, to which I followed him, and which proved to be that of the curé of the parish.

This, Sir, said I, (addressing myself to the ecclesiastic the moment I entered his door) is the man who attempted to carry off the young lady now at my castle, whose history you know. He could not forgive the imagined injury I did him by disappointing his purpose. He attacked me with fury, and heaven has made use of my arm to execute its wrath against him. He is in
a dying

a dying condition, and has need of your assistance: but all the crimes of this monster of iniquity you are still ignorant of, and of the grief and despair that rend my heart. I however wave my private resentment, tho' my revenge is not yet satisfied. Let a surgeon be called.

The surgeon who attended the lady I had rescued was then sent for. He came immediately; and examining the patient's wounds, found them mortal. All is over, said he, and nothing is now wanting but a spiritual guide; the medical art being scarce sufficient to recal him to his senses, and to enable him to profit by spiritual advice.

The curé took advantage of his last moments, endeavoured to calm his transports, exhorted him to repentance, and at last brought him to a confession of his crimes. He compelled him to ask my pardon, to avow his guilt to me, and to make me all the reparation in his power. I was instantly called; and remained with him alone in his chamber, wishing for, and yet dreading his recital.

Sir,

Sir, said he, at last, my career is almost finished; and may my death make atonement for a life which has only been marked by crimes. I have cruelly injured you, and beg your forgiveness. You know not all the extent of my villainy, nor all the wrongs I have done you. My person is unknown to you, tho' you have heard me spoken of. I have borne two different names, and have, under both, grossly injured you. My true and family name is de Balme.

Heavens! exclaimed I, can you be the man who deprived me of a father? Yes, answered he, you was then in your cradle; as I was in mine when my father fell by the hand of your's. Heaven is just; you have now avenged your father, and punished me for various crimes. Such was my first action. An imprudent mother, blinded by rage and revenge, gave me a savage education, inspired me with ferocious sentiments, and trained me up to violence and cruelty. She prepared me for all the outrages I have been guilty of during the age of passion, and
my

my ill conduct in consequence of her folly hurried her to her grave. Being sole heir to a respectable magistrate, who died without issue, I took his name, and that name was Valoure.

My astonishment now redoubled, and the dying man observed it.

It was under this name, continued he, that I endeavoured to deceive Madame Vau-reuil, and to get possession of Silvia. You rescued the latter from my assault, the night I got into her chamber, by your apartments being contiguous to her's; and I was on the point of making new attempts, (the people who kept the hotel and all their dependants being subservient to me thro' the power of gold) when you quitted your lodging, with Silvia and her mother. I heard of your felicity with torment. I envied your happiness, and determined to destroy it; but could not find you out.

On your departure for Paris, however (in order to close the eyes of St. Clair) I met with some of your people, and found out
your

your abode, and where Silvia was. I immediately set out for your estate—I kept myself concealed in its environs—and followed your wife to town. I knew she detested me, and therefore avoided being seen by her; but as I longed to possess her, I laid snares for her innocence. One of her women, seduced by my presents, did all in her power to alienate her affections from you during your absence, and I, at your return (which was too sudden) busied myself in setting you against her. My design was (by the assistance of her woman) to enter her apartment by night. But as that could not be done without your absence from the place, I thought it necessary to inspire you with jealousy, and therefore appeared in your view near your wife's apartment, and wrote you the anonymous letters you received. In a word, being tired at length of so much delay, I sent you the letter which you thought came from Monsieur de M—, and you set off directly. The woman whom I had bribed, and who I had brought into
my

my measures, introduced me into your wife's bed-chamber, and I took your place by her side. When she awoke, and found it was not you on whom she had lavished her caresses, she was on the point of screaming out; but when I made myself known to her, her wonder and astonishment kept her silent. I quitted her immediately—you arrived soon after—and must have perceived her grief and consternation. When I became acquainted that she was no longer with you, and when I found nobody knew what was become of her, I concluded you had been informed of what had happened; that she was dead; and that you had avenged yourself.

I listened to this dreadful confession with shuddering and affright, and my confusion being too great to suffer me to interrupt the savage author of my shame, he went on—

I was, however, soon after informed that she was still alive, and had fled from you, by a letter she wrote to me, and which ought to deliver into your hands as a testimony

mony of her innocence, and as a proof that I alone was guilty of the crime at which she shudders, and which plunges a dagger in your heart.

The passion I felt for her soon evaporated—I continued my dissipated life, and ran the full career of libertinism. When age began to steal upon me, the sex which constituted my felicity received my addresses with coldness, and my ardour for them being unabated, I laid snares for their innocence, and often made use of violence to gratify my illicit desires. How many crimes of this sort have I not to answer for!—how many innocent creatures have I not plunged into ruin! To conclude, I at last saw Adelaide; and being inflamed by her beauty, attempted to render myself agreeable in her eyes. But she was attached to her husband, and loved him with the utmost fondness; so that all my assiduities were vain. Being disappointed in my first scheme, I resolved to carry her off; and my valet, long accustomed to enterprizes of this nature,

ture, effected my purpose, and I was to have had possession of Adelaide the very day that you tore her from me. My rage was inexpressible when I heard of what you had done, and my domestic, without enquiring who you was, followed you to your castle. I knew this estate had formerly belonged to your family; but was ignorant of its having returned to you, and of your being its present possessor. When I found you was the man who had prevented my scheme, and was the enemy I was in pursuit of, my surprize was great and my rage redoubled. I intended to have sacrificed you—but heaven prevented my design, and has made you the avenger of Silvia, your father, and yourself. Pardon your wife—she is guiltless—read this letter as her justification—adieu!—I grow weak—let me make my peace with God—and be assured I shall make use of proper precautions to prevent your being brought into trouble after my death.

Terrified

44 EFFECTS OF THE PASSIONS.

Terrified and confounded at this recital, I became a prey to the most horrid ideas, and sat for some time with my arms folded, and my eyes fixed on the ground in an immoveable state: but just as I was on the point of shaking off this apathy of soul, and bursting out into the bitterest invectives against the villainous Valoure, the curé entered.—He perceived the state of my mind; and trembling lest the effects of my growing rage might prove instant death to the dying man, he drew me out of the apartment of this monster of guilt and iniquity—a wretch on whom I could not look without indignation and horror!

The first effusions of my heart were sobs and tears; and I was for some moments incapable of expressing my grief any other way: I held Silvia's letter in my hand, but dared not read it, and appeared the image of distress and woe. But at length coming to myself, I summoned resolution enough to open it (though with a trembling hand) and read as follows.—

“ Base

“ Base and cruel man!—are you now satisfied, and are your persecutions at an end? You have robbed me of my chastity, and dishonoured my husband—an husband who was before growing cool, and to whose affections I can now lay no further claim. I am going to a retreat inaccessible to men, in order to repent of having been an accomplice (though an innocent one) in your guilt, and to deplore the loss of an husband whose affection might have been recoverable but for you, and the fatal testimony I bear of your villainy and my shame. If remorse can enter your ferocious soul, think of your wickedness, repent of your abominable crime, and at least justify me to my husband. Prevail on him to pity, tho’ he cannot love me; and endeavour to render me less culpable in his eyes. This is the motive of my writing to you; and your doing as I request is the only thing that can in any degree abate the aversion and hatred that I bear you.”

I shuddered during the perusal of this letter; and when I had done reading, bath-

ed it with my tears. Silvia is not guilty then, said I; but what does that signify!—O Silvia!—Silvia!—we can never meet again!—the guilty wretch who has undone thee, has plunged a poisoned arrow into thy husband's heart, which can never be extracted without occasioning his instant death.—We are born to be unhappy—we are mutually miserable—and cannot be otherwise!

The curé rejoined me at this moment, and informed me that the villainous Valoure was no more. You had no sooner left him (added the ecclesiastic) than he sent for two notaries, and owned himself guilty of attempting to carry off Adelaide, and of compelling you to fight with him in consequence of your having prevented his scheme. He acknowledged he merited the death he received at your hands, and he has left you all his property as a small atonement for the base injury he has done you. Saying this, the curé put a deed into my hands, intreating me to pardon (and that from the
ground

ground of my heart) the unhappy man who had just expired, and who had implored my forgiveness with his dying breath.

My forgiveness! exclaimed I (the contents of Silvia's letter being still strongly impressed on my mind) my forgiveness!—the monster!—the barbarian!—can I forget!

Consider, Sir, replied this good ecclesiastic; consider the state of the soul of this miserable man—a soul which is now before the tribunal of God. Are you not sufficiently avenged?—and if divine mercy, moved by his repentance, be inclined to pardon his transgressions, can you withhold your forgiveness? and consent to make a being wretched that would otherwise be happy?

I could not resist these pious and pathetic remonstrances (the eloquence of this good man being too strong for my rage). Well, said I (after a pause) I do pardon this unhappy wretch, though he has marked all my future days with horror, and then tearing the deed which the curé had given me (and which I still held in my hand) into a

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thousand

thousand pieces, I scattered it about the room.

Being now inattentive to all that surrounded me, and dwelling continually on the horrid information I had received, I became more solitary than ever, and scarce enquired after the health of Adelaide; though she was, nevertheless, taken great care of, in consequence of the orders I had at first given. My mind was now perpetually agitated by a train of tumultuous thoughts, and Silvia was always the subject of them. We might have been happy, thought I—we might have been blest—for Silvia was not guilty!—But then Valoure!—execrable Valoure!—thou hast poisoned all my happiness!

The outrage this monster had committed—the noise my wife's elopement had occasioned—and the fatal delicacy and susceptibility of my character (which constituted my chief torment) left me not a gleam of hope. Every thought plunged me into despair, and every idea tore my heart in pieces by suggesting

gesting new obstacles to my re-union with Silvia. Reason, indeed, came sometimes to my assistance ; but her light was inadequate to the gloom that surrounded me, and I soon became as dark as ever. I remained in this state of chaos and confusion sometime ; fearing to form any desire, yet secretly wishing to be re-united to Silvia.

The health of Adelaide being at length re-established, she complained to me of her loss of happiness, and of the misery she endured by being separated from her husband. This was a subject I could not bear. It increased the force of my distressing ideas, and almost made me mad. I left her abruptly—I fled into the forest—and exclaimed—oh Silvia!—Silvia!—thou wouldest have still constituted my happiness—thou wouldest still have been as dear to me as Adelaide’s husband is to her—but for a wretch!—a villain!—a monster! These ideas, which after this first fall recurred frequently, familiarized themselves to my mind by degrees, and I at last felt nothing but sorrow. I de-

plored nothing but the loss of Silvia; and delicacy giving way to affection, reason reassumed her empire over me. I was now concerned about nothing but the fate of the woman I adored, and thought of nothing but recovering her again.

I continually repeated her name—I called on heaven to restore her to me—and now thought the injury she had sustained (and which I could not before recollect without horror) ought the more to endear her to me. She is innocent! cried I—she is guiltless!—she ought to be forgiven!—Valoure is alone to blame!—Valoure!—the vile Valoure! Thus was my heart rent to pieces, and thus did I regret my separation from her. Where are you, Silvia? exclaimed I at times, and what is become of you?—why did you quit an husband who adores you?—why did you not confide in his tenderness, and wait for his pardon?—oh return, —return—and bless me with your love!—return to an husband who loves you more than ever!

During

During these frequent rhapsodies of my mind, Adelaide would sometimes enter, in order to divert my thoughts and dispel the gloom that surrounded me. I had often heard her express great solicitude to be restored to her husband, but never thought of asking his name, being too much occupied by my own sorrows to pay any attention to those of others. Through the habit of misfortune, and through a false supposition that every body must be unhappy because I was so myself, I might have continued in this state of insensibility with regard to the concerns of those about me, had I not one day walked out with Adelaide.

I one morning attended her to a terrace, the lofty trees of which formed a pleasing alcove, and through which we could on all sides behold a delightful prospect. The sun was rising in all its splendor, the serenity of the sky announced a fine day, and all surrounding objects beautified by degrees. These charms of nature, however, made no impression on me. I looked at

them without admiration, and should have remained unmoved had I not observed the effect they had on Adelaide. Her countenance expressed admiration—her eyes glistered with delight—and she seemed to devour the beauties of the surrounding prospect. Oh Sir! said she to me at last, what a ravishing view is this!—there is no looking at it without rapture!

These words awakened my attention. I cast my eyes on the plain. I saw the rays of the sun gilded the tops of the trees; that the rivers seemed to flow with waves of silver; that various degrees of light and shade beautifully diversified the prospect; and that the fields and woods were covered with a delightful verdure. This scene struck me. But alas! nothing, since the loss of Silvia, could engage my attention long.

O my dear husband! cried Adelaide, what joy would it give me to behold this glorious prospect, with you at my side! Struck by these words more than by the former;—he loves you then, said I, and has lost you.

What

What an horrible state! This scene could give him no delight without you!—he could never enjoy it! But why do you not fly to embellish nature in his eyes, and restore him to the felicity he has lost?

I now asked her the place of her husband's residence, and reproached myself for not having done so before. Oh heavens! cried I mentally, a being suffers whom I could relieve!—I have failed in my duty—I have forgot myself! I instantly sent off an express to Monsieur de Merin (such was the name of Adelaide's husband) informing him where she was to be found, and acquainting him with her melancholy adventure; while she related in what manner she had escaped violation, and how she had been snatched from infamy.

Monsieur de Merin was at his chateau, and received this intelligence with transport. He broke out into an exclamation of joy, (the first emotion of that sort he had felt since the loss of Adelaide) and immediately came post to rejoin her.

The moment he arrived, he flew into her arms with transport; and then turning to me, embraced me without being able to express his feelings. Adelaide was in a similar situation. She blended her sighs and tears with those of her husband, and they could only testify their joy by mutual endearments. I was moved at this scene. A secret satisfaction penetrated my heart, and I was happy in the idea (my sensibility never forsaking me) of having been instrumental in their felicity.

This pleasure, however, was of short duration. It was but like lightening, which darted its instantaneous glare and vanished in a moment. The satisfaction enjoyed by Monsieur and Madame de Merin, made me recollect that I might have been equally happy, but for the absence of her who could alone shed sunshine on my days. O Silvia! Silvia! said I mentally, when wilt thou return, and banish the gloom that surrounds me?

My

My melancholy increased during Monsieur de Merin's stay at my castle, which was several days; and the basest of all sentiments got admission into my mind. I became jealous of his happiness; envied his felicity; and could not bear to see him blest while I was wretched. In vain did I strive to repel this ungenerous passion, and endeavour to participate the satisfaction of my guests. My grief and despair were visible, in spite of all my efforts to conceal them; and Monsieur and Madame de Merin observed the constraint I was in before them, without having the least suspicion of its cause.

Monsieur de Merin, however, becoming disgusted by my behaviour, one day hinted his disapprobation of my conduct; on which I took his hand and that of Adelaide, and intreated them to excuse the impropriety of my behaviour. Let not your indignation rise against me, said I; for if you knew my situation you would pity me. I was formed to enjoy felicity as well as you; but you
are

are happy, and I am miserable. Attend to the relation of my misfortunes. I have need of consolation; I have need of friends to participate my woes; and of those into whose faithful bosoms I can pour out the effusions of my heart.

I remained silent some minutes after this speech, in order to summons resolution enough to proceed; while they, strongly impressed by what I had said, prepared to listen to me with the utmost attention. I shed torrents of tears during my relation—I testified the anguish of my soul by every expression of grief—and at last finished my unhappy story.

Judge now, said I, my dear de Merin, whether my heart can enjoy your happiness, and whether a being such as I, whose life has been a continual scene of sufferings and misfortunes, interspersed with gleams of happiness which have only served to encrease his misery, can look on your felicity otherwise than as a torment? What comfort indeed can be given to such a wretch as I am? an husband strongly attached to a wife whom
he

he adores, and who has fled from him in spite of his affection—an husband who languishes for her return, tho' delicacy forbids the wishes he is continually forming, and recollection poisons the idea of re-union.

Monsieur and Madame de Merin, who shed tears and shuddered at the recital of my unhappy story, now made apologies for their indiscreet resentment; and looking at each other, with a sigh, seemed to intimate how miserable they should have been in a like predicament.

In pity to my situation, they afterwards restrained their mutual fondness, and endeavoured, when in my presence, to assume a coolness of behaviour towards each other very ill suited to the feelings of their hearts. But I soon perceived the motive of their conduct, and prevailed on them to act as if I was not there—tho' their endearments were as a poniard to my heart.

After their departure, I led a more solitary life than ever; and hoping that my son (who had finished his studies) would in some
measure

measure dispel the gloom of my mind, I sent for him home. He was now grown up to manhood. He was pleasing in his person, agreeable in his manners, and the very picture of Silvia. I could not look at him without emotion. I could not help dwelling on the lineaments of his face, and feeling a pang at every observation. O Silvia, cried I, thou art not here to enjoy this happy scene, and to participate the satisfaction I feel at this meeting.

He was well informed; was very sensible; and reasoned with justness and fire. He was continually with me; and made it his study to divert and comfort me; but never suffered his curiosity to prevail with him so far as to induce him to interrogate me with regard to the cause of my grief. His consolatory behaviour made me delight in his society. He suspended my tears—he revived my heart—and I often folded him in my arms.—Oh, my son! cried I—you are my only consolation!—my only support!—you
pour

pour balm into my wounds, and restore peace to my agitated soul.

During this state, in which my grief was subsiding into melancholy, and while my pangs of heart only returned at intervals, I received a letter from Vilson. This faithful friend; who had been my constant correspondent, who sincerely pitied my situation, and who had renounced his former chimerical researches, and lived on the small patrimony he had left, now diverted my attention from the present by recalling the past.

He informed me that M. d'Erlet, stung by remorse, and conscious of being the cause of my misfortunes and of his daughter's death, desired to see me, in order to obtain my forgiveness; and that my cousin (grandson to my late benefactor) lay at the point of death; and having no children, desired my presence at ———, as heir to his estate. He then added his entreaties that I would obey their joint summons; and concluded his letter by saying—I shall now see you again—
shall

shall communicate many things to you which cannot be committed to paper—and shall make you a witness of my felicity.

Reason suggested to me the necessity of following Vilson's advice; as however indifferent these things were to me, I was not at liberty to neglect the interest of my son, who might one day have cause to reproach me for not having paid due attention to his concerns. If life be hateful to me, thought I, that is no reason for my neglect of duty to my son; who claims my patronage as a being dependent on me. The estate of M. de Merville (if Heaven wills the death of its present possessor) returns into my family, and my son may by that means be enabled to support his name and dignity. I then reflected on the late repentance of d'Erlet, and pitied his condition (tho' I despised the man, and shuddered at him as being the first cause of my misfortunes) resolving to grant his request, but never intending to see him more.

I set

I set out immediately; and arrived just time enough to close the eyes of my cousin de Merville, who knew me not at my entrance, as the slight traces my features had made on his mind in his infancy were effaced. He was almost under the stroke of death when I was announced, and in broken accents spoke to me as follows.—I know the principal events of your life, said he; and have been made acquainted with what you did for my father, and that you were the adopted son of my grand-father. I have long kept you out of your fortune, and I now resign it into your hands.

Saying these words, he expired; and, soon after his interment, I received the visits of those in the neighbourhood who had slighted me in consequence of my misfortunes. They formerly avoided me because I was poor, and now flocked towards me because I was rich.

D'Erlet in the mean time waited for me with impatience (tho' he dreaded my presence); and Vilson urged me to overcome
my

my repugnance, and obey his summons. He had long languished under the united weight of grief and self-reproach; and continually thought he saw his daughter, surrounded by the shades of death, tremble at his cruelty and inflexible rigour. He fancied he saw her point to the tomb, and accuse him of being the cause of her early dissolution. He was helpless; unable to sustain himself; and was void of support from others—his conduct having estranged all mankind from him.

Moved by his miserable condition, I went to his castle, though I could scarce summon resolution enough to encounter this scene. I found him pale, dejected, and in a trembling state. I come Sir, said I, to return you thanks for your kind though late remembrance of me. Your conduct has never influenced mine—I have ever respected you, as the father of Julia.

He answered me at first by sobs and tears; and then said,—oh, Floricourt! do not add to my misery!—I am guilty—I confess I am.—

am.—Poor Julia!—I have lost her; and I was the cause of her death! wretch that I am!—I hurried her to the tomb!—Oh Floricourt! what an old age is mine!—I have destroyed her who would have proved the consolation of my days—my daughter!—celestial soul! thy father is deservedly punished, and thou art avenged! I might have now been a grandfather; my days might have rolled on in tranquillity; you might have closed my eyes; and I might have descended into the grave in peace! Sighs and tears now stopped his utterance, and mine would not be restrained. Pardon me, said he at last, and forget what a wretch I have been!

This humiliated state of a man whom I had once seen so haughty, proud, and unfeeling, a man in whose presence I used to tremble, as the arbitrator of my fate, and as the disposer of Julia, touched me. Let us not talk of what is past, said I; let us forget it. Ah! cried he, that can never—never be!—can I forget! oh no! I see Julia

lia at this moment—she is ever present with me—I think she seems to point me out as an example to unfeeling fathers! Oh Floricourt!—you ought to have sacrificed me—But you spare me!—you pity me!

His situation cut me to the soul; my aversion to him vanished, and I shuddered at his having discovered his injustice so late! Oh had these sentiments pervaded his soul, thought I, during the life of Julia, how happy I should have been! nothing would then have ruffled the serenity of my days, and I should have been one of the most happy instead of one of the most miserable of human beings!

In spite of these reflections, which might have served to exasperate me still more against him, I did all in my power to comfort and support the wretched d'Erlet; tho' my own heart was rent to pieces at the time, by the recollection of Julia and of Silvia.

Vilson, who was almost continually with me, had a very young female relation at his house,

house, who was very amiable; whom he had brought up from infancy, and who struck me greatly at first sight. I observed my son was particularly attentive to her, and that he gazed at her perpetually. He was never so happy as when at the house of my friend; and often passed whole days there. I examined him critically when in company with the young Sophia, (for that was the name of Vilson's relation) and plainly perceived in him the first symptoms of love. This growing passion in my son gave me no alarm; I rather wished to encourage it; as I thought it would confirm my friendship to the worthy Vilson. My son's marriage with his young relation, said I, will do my friend credit, and will prevent his exhausting his little fortune in her favour.

This affair engaged all my attention. I studied the heart and feelings of my son. I saw him pensive, disordered, and embarrassed, except when in company with Sophia, or when she was the subject of discourse.

course. This observation gave me pleasure, and I delighted in my scheme.

D'Erlet however, who was never easy but when I was with him, sometimes diverted my attention from this concern so near my heart; and by importuning me to attend him, recalled my painful sensations. I pitied his situation, compassionated his misery, and yet dared not discover before him the agitations of my soul, lest they should add to his torments. I had been long accustomed to restrain my emotions, to conceal my feelings, and to confine them to my own breast. This habit made me grave, melancholy, and dejected. I shunned society; and my friends upbraided me for it. They knew not my secret sorrows; I never intrusted them to any one but Vilson; and indeed had I done so, what consolation could I have received? they would only have distressed me by a chain of cold reasoning, which I was unable to profit by, and would have encreased my grief without participating it.

The

The fatality of the unhappy d'Erlet however approached. He was seized with a mortal distemper, the more formidable and dreadful by his being unprepared for death and haunted by a guilty conscience. I could not leave him in this extremity, and he one day (after there remained not the least hopes of his life) spoke to me as follows.

Behold me now, said he, at the end of my career. All hope is fled!—I am on the point of appearing before the tribunal of God, and have not one good action to plead in my behalf! I have been the scourge of the poor who were dependent on me; I have crushed the unfortunate tenants of my estates; and have plunged whole families into ruin. I have with-held the subsistence of those who were compelled by necessity to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow; and my wife fell a sacrifice to my revenge! I cannot recollect an action but what brands me with injustice. The ingratitude of my wife was no excuse for
my

my conduct; and my cruelty to her daughter and my own was horrible! O Floricourt!—Floricourt!—pardon—pardon me!—Julia loved you when on earth, and will approve of what you do tho' she is now in Heaven—your misfortunes were originally of my creating; and my large possessions are your due both as an atonement for my guilt and as your inheritance. Accept them, therefore, as a mark of my sincere repentance, and as a proof that you no longer resent the injury I have done you. Great God!—Eternal judge!—I humble myself before thee!—I deplore my sins!—I supplicate thy mercy!—I have misunderstood thy law; which taught me to love humanity, to do good to all my fellow creatures, and to make a proper use of the means thou hadst given me; which might have made me happy, had I communicated happiness to others. But it is now too late; and my present conduct is the only atonement I can make for my past life!

After

After this, his voice sunk, and he soon articulated with difficulty. Thanks! said he at times; thanks! omnipotent God!—at others, unfortunate wife!—dear Julia!—plead for me!—soften divine justice in my favor! and then, Floricourt! dear Floricourt! let me not die oppressed by your hatred—let me not appear before the supreme judge under the weight of your accusations!

These words were accompanied by convulsive sobs and suffocating sighs; and the rattle of death succeeded. Where am I going, said he (his eyes expressing the torture of his soul, and his tongue almost refusing its office) where am I going?—I am impelled in spite of all my efforts—what do those phantoms mean?—O, how they haunt me! He took my hand; he pressed it feebly; and made a motion to grasp that of the priest (who assisted him in these trying moments, and exhorted him to rely on the mercy of God). Hold me—hold me—cried he; I am dragged away—I am torn.

from this place!—assist—support me—I am falling—I am sinking into the earth—hold me—hold me!

He now ceased to speak; he looked around him with a bewildered air, but seemed to see nothing; he endeavoured to raise himself in his bed, in order to resist the force that opposed him; he held our hands, pressed them feebly, and discovered the ineffectual efforts of a man who is just expiring.

To these emotions, which still indicated a degree of sense, succeeded convulsions, the sure prognostics of the total derangement of the organs of sensation, and of the destruction of the animal machine. He tried to raise himself again; he pressed our hands; he fetched his last sigh, and expired; resembling a dying lamp which puts forth all its blaze at the moment of extinction.

The scene of death is always terrible to man, as it reminds him of his precarious state,

state, and of the gaol to which he is every minute hastening. I felt its influence; I regretted the wretched d'Erlet (tho' he had been the primary cause of all my misfortunes) and dropped a tear at his dissolution.

Unhappy man! cried I, the moment he was gone, thou seemest not to have been born for tyranny and oppression! But why—oh, why did not these latent sparks of virtue and humanity appear in thee before the moment of thy dissolution? Thou mightest have been the joy instead of the scourge of human beings! thou mightest—O God,—pardon this weak mortal, who has been so long blinded by his unruly passions, and who has at last been enlightened by thy grace!

I shuddered at the recollection of his tortures; tortures, which must ever attend the dying moments of him whose conscience is not clear. I do not doubt of divine mercy, or of the efficacy of repentant tears; but who can avoid trembling at the

sight of a guilty man on the brink of eternity?—who can avoid wishing to lead a life more consonant to virtue and religion? How very different was the end of d’Erlet from that of St. Clair, who had only infirmities to repent of, and whose upright heart had never been wilfully guilty. How different from that of Madame Vareuil; whose wrong tenets with regard to religion were her only faults—faults in which she had been brought up from her infancy, and in which she had been confirmed by the barbarous treatment received by an husband she fondly loved. She was a noble minded woman, a faithful and intrepid wife, an affectionate mother, and sacrificed herself in turn to her husband and daughter. She practised all the virtues; she loved humanity; and died a friend to all mankind.

These reflections pursued me. I recollected Valoure, and his agonies at the hour of death. What must have been his feelings,
cried

cried I, at the awful separation of soul and body! The remorse of criminals in that trying moment is terrifying. The wise man shudders at their state, and the million shed tears without being sensible of the cause that produces this effusion. They hear the culprits accuse themselves of crimes; they hear them deplore their transgressions; and trembling, sue for mercy. They know not what to make of this awful scene, and at last conclude that the malefactors died penitent.

My reason approved not of these sudden and forced conversions; which seemed only the effect of fear, in consequence of an ill spent life. Can a few moments of remorse and contrition, cried I, atone for a succession of crimes—a perpetual scene of injustice and cruelty? can it atone for the private and irreparable ills done to individuals?—can it make amends to the injured husband?—to the tender parent?—Oh, impenetrable—oh, supreme justice!—I bow with all humility before thee—but I

cannot comprehend these things! I know that thy goodness is boundless, that thou art in every place, and that thou hast provided an asylum for the souls of men.—I feel thee in my heart.—Thou hast commanded me to do all the good in my power, and to be useful to my fellow-creatures; to be humane, generous, and compassionate, if I expect to receive the same treatment from others.—I adore thy wise, though impenetrable dispensations; I cherish the divine principle which thou hast implanted in my heart; and find a satisfaction in virtue that nothing but herself can give!

After I had paid the last duties to the remains of d'Erlet, and had entered into the possession of his estates and property, my first care was to make amends for his deficiencies, and to render his dependants happy. Great God! said I, thou didst not think fit to grant him time to execute the purposes he had formed! He was cut off in the hour of repentance; and it is my
duty

duty to fulfil his good intentions ; and to do what he designed ! I now employed myself wholly in this weighty business, and was assisted by my son, who had not yet acquainted me with his passion, though I had done my utmost to extort the secret from him. I had conducted him to my estates, where our mutual care and succour were necessary. But his attention was wholly fixed on Sophia ; he bitterly regretted his separation from her, and seemed lost in reflection. He obeyed my commands without hesitation ; but the moment he was at liberty, he sought out the most solitary places in order to indulge his thoughts.

I observed this contemplative humour ; I recollected my feelings when under the influence of the passion I had felt for Julia ; and knew it was the very place where I had endured such pangs and anxiety. I followed his steps, musing, and in a measure enjoyed the delirium of my first passion. But when I began to recollect its deplorable consequences,

quences, I shuddered, and then recurring to Silvia, I prayed for her return, and asked her of Heaven as an atonement for all the miseries I had suffered !

Father and son were both unhappy ; but the degree of their inquietude was very unequal—mine seeming very unlikely to have an end ; and that of my son being entirely dependent on my will, which was always to make him happy.

Being however hurt by his silence and want of confidence in me, I determined to punish him ; but that punishment was to be inflicted by a father and a friend. My purpose was to create fears in him ; to make him doubt of my consent to the union nearest his heart ; and then (by removing the imaginary obstacles I had raised) to encrease the degree of his felicity.

One day, when his love of solitude induced him to quit me and take a solitary walk in the park, I followed him ; and after keeping at a distance from him for
some

some time, met him as if by accident. He was so much engaged by his own reflections, that he did not observe me; and I addressed him thus—You are very thoughtful; very solitary; and are continually absenting yourself from a father who fondly loves you, and whose happiness depends upon you.

He started—coloured—and sighed—but knew not how to answer this reproach.

My son, added I, (perceiving his confusion) let us enter into serious conversation: I will not conceal my having followed you; for your situation makes me uneasy, and I wish to remove the sorrow which seems to prey upon your heart. My misfortunes are endless; my happy days are fled; and my only care now is to make you happy. You must therefore cast off this gloom; you must wear a face of joy; and by that means lessen your father's misfortunes.

He listened to me with inquietude; and not daring to lift up his eyes, kept them fixed on the ground. Seeming to pay no

attention to his embarrassment, I continued, I intend to take you with me to-morrow to the chateau of one of my neighbours, who has a daughter remarkable for beauty, and for every mental and bodily accomplishment. She has already been proposed to me as a proper alliance for you, and I am resolved to make her your wife. Oh ! Sir ! said he, interrupting me, and shedding tears as he spoke, I—I— How is this ? retorted I ; and what can be the cause of your emotion ? is it owing to grief or joy ? explain yourself—speak—open your heart to me !

He turned away his head ; he made no answer ; and all the father rising in my heart, I spoke to him as follows—Compose yourself, my son ; we will not go to the chateau I mentioned ; there is nothing yet settled ; and as you seem so much averse to the proposal, it shall drop. But why conceal the state of your heart ?—why hide your sentiments from me, whom you know

to

to be your friend?—whom you know to be an affectionate father? Speak—confess—and make me easy.

He threw himself at my feet; he bathed them with his tears; and exclaimed—O best of fathers! do not overwhelm your son!—a son who would die to serve you! my respect alone has kept me silent—I trembled at avowing a passion that my father should disapprove; and restrained my tongue that I might not offend him. But what are riches, Sir? are they sufficient to constitute felicity? could a marriage formed by interest alone prove happy? or could a woman forced into my arms, either feel or communicate happiness? In a union of love, every thing pleases and delights. Here, inequality of fortune often encreases felicity, and the party who descends is always the most obliged. But I think not of descending. I glory in my attachment to Sophia; and should be highly honoured by becoming her husband. Since this is
the

the case, said I, when he had done speaking, I will not oppose your happiness; tho' your want of confidence in me merits a contrary behaviour. Vilson is my bosom friend, and is well acquainted with the events which have constituted my infelicity. I have been unfortunate in love, and will endeavour to make you otherwise. I will speak to Vilson; I will urge the happiness of my son; and will prevail on him to consent to your union with Sophia. O, my dear Sir! exclaimed he, how happy you make me! But Vilson seems to disapprove my passion, and is always very uneasy when I am in company with Sophia. I am perfectly acquainted with his character, replied I; he thinks that your situation in life is so much above Sophia's, as to preclude all hopes of your ever becoming her husband. His want of confidence in me has been equal to your's: he has doubted of my consent to your marriage; and has been equally culpable with yourself. You have both read
my

my character falsely; you have both done me injustice; and I ought to punish you. But I will not. We will return to town; I will speak to Vilson on this subject; and you shall only have to regret your having wilfully deferred your happiness so long.

He took my hand—he pressed it to his lips—he discovered the utmost joy—and broke forth into acknowledgments. O, Sir! said he, what obligations do I not owe you! But it is now a fortnight since I have seen Sophia—an age in love!—The business which brought you hither is finished—you have promised to make me happy—let us be gone! I smiled at his impatience; I recollected my own feelings in similar circumstances; and immediately gave orders for our departure.

The moment we arrived in town, my son flew to Vilson, and informed him I was come, and wanted to speak with him. My friend immediately obeyed the summons, tho' he had no conception of what
I had

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I had to say to him, and was perhaps uneasy at the suddenness of my arrival. Vilson, said I, the moment he entered, do you love me as formerly? am I as dear to you as ever? has your friendship for me suffered no diminution? He stared; he knew not what to make of my address; and at last said—ought these questions to be put by Floricourt? Your wonder will cease, said I, when I have explained my meaning. I have a son; and that son loves Sophia. You have perceived his passion—you have doubted of my consent to their union—and have suspected your friend of mercenary views!

Tho' Vilson seemed confused at first, he soon recovered himself, and spoke to me as follows—Floricourt, said he, you do me the greatest injustice; you accuse me of want of friendship, and you yourself fail in it by suspecting me. I have a secret to communicate; a secret which I always intended to confide to your bosom, tho' I have been
hitherto

hitherto prevented. Sophia is no relation of mine ; nor does she in the least belong to me. Learn therefore her history—As I was about fifteen years ago walking by one of those structures which are raised by public charity for the reception of unfortunate babes abandoned by their mothers and produced by the indulgence of criminal desires, an infant was presented to me by a woman who intreated me to speak in its favour to the directors of the house, in order to have it put on the foundation. This infant was Sophia. Her lovely face; her infantine sweetness; and a secret attraction that I could not account for, engaged me in her favour, and I resolved to adopt her as my own. I had no difficulty in obtaining what I asked for; the child was committed to my care by the directors, and in an hour after I received a letter in an unknown hand. This letter contained thanks and acknowledgements for my having taken charge of Sophia, and a declaration

declaration that I was the person intended as her guardian, tho' the officiousness of the woman who had taken advantage of the first moments of grief and anguish had induced her to present the child to me so abruptly. The letter added, that Sophia belonged to parents whom I should hereafter be happy in having obliged; that she would be redemanded of me in happier days; and that she was in the mean time committed to my honour and probity. If at the age of fifteen, said the writer of this letter, Sophia still remains under your care, the sorrows of her mother will not yet be at an end, and you must endeavour to establish her in a creditable tho' humble manner; which will appear the less humiliating to her by her having been kept in ignorance of her birth. She will be observed now and then, tho' unknown to her and you.

This letter, continued Vilson, increased my attachment to Sophia, and I spared no expence in her education. I looked on her

her as my child, and applauded my conduct in having snatched so lovely a creature from the ignominy entailed on her by parents to whose unlawful connection I concluded she owed her birth.

This information of my friend's at first threw me into a reverie. But when I began to reflect calmly and deliberately on this matter, I condemned myself for having demurred a moment. Can Sophia be to blame? said I mentally, can she be answerable for her mother's wantonness, or her father's crime? and further, can I forget the effects of love, and the power of that passion over the human heart? can I be insensible of the fatal consequences such a disposition as that of d'Erlets, in a parent, may produce? and can I harden my heart against this innocent creature? No; let reason rise above prejudice, and let me act as I ought. Well, Vilson, said I, you have told me all, and have

have acquitted yourself with honour. I might have perhaps preferred your silence on this subject. But my son adores Sophia. She is supposed to be your relation. Let her be thought so still, and I shall be satisfied.

Stop, interrupted Vilson, stop, my friend! I owe you an unlimited confidence! The soul of Sophia rises superior to the disadvantages of her birth! But you know not all. This heart; this hitherto insensible heart, yields to the charms of this young beauty. I could not behold the graces of her person and mind without admiration; and like Pygmalion, became enamoured of what I fancied the work of my own hands. But you seem determined to rob me of my treasure, and to rend from me this blooming creature whom I have rear'd with so much care. Being doubtful of settling her to advantage elsewhere, I myself intended to marry her, and fancied she might be happy with me, as she was then ignorant of the passion of
love,

love, and had not yet seen your son. But the disparity of our ages now puts a stop to my scheme—I see the absurdity of my ideas—and yield Sophia to him. I made a point of questioning her on the subject; and acquainted her with the history of her birth. She shed tears at my recital; but soon wiped them away; and with a frankness and innocence peculiar to herself, spoke to me as follows—My benefactor!—my father!—I owe all my happiness to you, and my gratitude supercedes all the attractions of love. The misfortunes of my birth, which at first softened you in my favour, have still pleaded in my behalf, and your affection for me has never been diminished. You have nurtured me as your child; you would now raise me to the station of your wife; and I cannot doubt of my happiness with you.—But give me time for reflection—give me time to develop the confused ideas of my mind, and the strange emotions of my heart. I ought
not

not however to conceal from you the impressions that the young Floricourt has made upon me, tho' I should be in despair were I to think that my affection for him exceeded that I feel for you. Oh, no! my benefactor! your happiness shall always be nearest my heart—and Floricourt, with all his accomplishments, would be slighted by me if his attachment gave you any uneasiness. This discourse filled me with admiration, hope, and fear; and I was fluctuating under the influence of these contrary emotions, when your son arrived.

The conclusion of Vilson's speech struck me with astonishment: and when he had done speaking, I remained silent some time, not knowing what to say. Oh, my friend! exclaimed I at last, what things have you communicated! Just Heaven!—how am I to act?—whose interest am I to prefer?—that of my friend or son?—Your claims, my dear Vilson, are very powerful; they are rooted in my heart. But then my son—

my

my darling son!—I know not what to wish, nor how to make the election!—yet what have I to do in this matter?—settle it between yourselves, and let me never be consulted. Oh love! fatal passion!—thy poisoned shafts are not yet exhausted—I feel them at second hand!—my son cannot be happy without making Vilson miserable—but my son will die, and I shall soon follow him!

Vilson was all this time strongly affected; and when I had ended this passionate exclamation, said, in a resolute tone of voice, —let us wait, my friend—let us stay for Sophia's determination! If a sacrifice be necessary I know who must be the man. The disparity of age points me out as the unsuccessful lover. I can sustain the stroke with fortitude; and am too much your friend to repine at it.

He could not finish this speech without visible emotion, though he turned away his head, and endeavoured to suppress his sighs.

Adieu,

Adieu, Floricourt ! said he, as he retired ; while I was too much absorbed in my own reflections to prevent his going, to afford him any consolation, or to thank him for his disinterested friendship.

Soon after he was gone, my son entered, overwhelmed with grief by Sophia's having acquainted him with her history. He trembled lest a similar information should induce me to revoke my promise with regard to their union ; and he came with a palpitating heart to consult my looks ; wishing yet dreading to discover my sentiments.

I soon made him easy with regard to my consent ; but he had still doubts with regard to that of Sophia. This admirable woman, noble in all her conduct, acted with a candour peculiar to herself. She made no scruple of confessing her partiality to my son, and acknowledged the merit of his disinterested affection : yet she at the same time avowed her attachment to Vilson, who she said had an equal claim to her regard.

I feel

I feel that I love you, said she ; but Vilson is dear to me also. He is my benefactor, my friend, and I cannot help loving him. The sensations of my heart are inexplicable.—I cannot develope them.—You are both dear to me ; and I cannot resolve to afflict either of you.

Tho' this discourse of Sophia's, which was dictated by truth and candour, filled my son with apprehensions, I could discover nothing in it but what was favourable to his wishes ; and therefore endeavoured to inspire him with hope. But love (always timid) suggested insurmountable obstacles in the midst of apparent security ; and it was not without great difficulty that I restored him to tolerable tranquillity.

Vilson had devoted the whole night to reflection, without being able to come to any determination ; and the next morning applied to Sophia for her answer. It remains with you, fair creature, said he, either to pronounce for me or the son of my dearest

dearest friend. Should your determination be in favour of the latter, I shall submit without repining, and shall never regret having been the cause of hastening your felicity.

Sophia was confused. She knew not what to answer. And at a time of life when few women would have hesitated, (my son being nearly of her own age, and Vilson old enough to be her father) she remained silent. Well, said my friend, since the balance is equal, it is easy to see which ought to preponderate—Florincourt must be your husband, and I must be your friend. Your hesitation does me honour; but your happiness should be established on a solid basis. Florincourt is young, and I am old. My years are numbered; but he is in the bloom of life. The sacrifice costs me dear; it wounds me deeply; but Sophia—my friend Sophia—wills it so.

Saying this, he instantly sent for my son, and presented him to Sophia as the man
who

who ought to be her husband. He could not do this without great emotion. Sophia wept; and my son (tho' transported with joy) could not help pitying Vilson, and admiring his greatness of soul.

I entered in the midst of this interesting scene; and enjoying it as a party concerned, embraced them in turn. I loved my son with unbounded affection; Vilson was the inmate of my soul; and Sophia (whose virtues and graces merited my utmost attention) inspired me with sentiments of admiration and respect. I would not postpone the happiness of my children. I made immediate preparations for their nuptials; and the happy day was fixed. Vilson waited for it with composure; and consented to every thing proposed with little constraint, and with a dignity of mind characteristic of himself and of his uncommon friendship for me.

The evening before the ceremony was to be performed, we supped together, and I

retired with my son. He threw himself at my feet; he embraced my knees; he poured out his whole soul before me; he thanked me over and over again; and was never weary of acknowledgments. His ardours recalled those I had myself felt, and the remembrance pained me. O my son! said I, you long to obtain her you love;—may you be more successful than your father!—may you be prosperous!—may you be happy! I could not pronounce these words without a secret shuddering—without a painful contraction of the heart—and without fetching deep sighs, which I in vain endeavoured to suppress.

I passed the night in melancholy reflections, the idea of Silvia often recurring to my remembrance with additional inquietude; and towards morning I found myself so much indisposed, that I apprehended an approaching fever. This afflicted me greatly; as I well knew my being taken ill would unavoidably delay a marriage so ardently wished for. I therefore made an effort.—I rose as
soon

soon as it was day; and was just preparing to follow my son, (who had preceded me to the altar) when a letter was delivered into my hands. As I thought it of no consequence, I was going to put it into my pocket, in order to read it at a more convenient season, when I was told by the man who brought it that I must break the seal immediately. I opened the letter—I saw the hand writing of Silvia—and to my astonishment read these words—

“ Tremble, Floricourt, at completing a marriage such as you intend—fly and prevent an incest !”

Heavens! exclaimed I, (my legs trembling under me, and my whole frame shaken as with a tempest) what is it that I am informed of?—Am I alive—and do I breathe? I threw myself into a chair; my eyes grew dim; I could scarce distinguish surrounding objects;—and was a great while before I could finish reading the remaining contents of this dreadful letter, which were as follows.

K 2

” Your

“ Your unhappy wife, who fell a sacrifice to the base outrage of a villain, became guilty without her knowledge; and a monster of whom you may perhaps have heard, took your place one night by her side, and she was doubtful whose offspring she bore in her womb. She could not look at you without horror—She avoided your sight—She fled from you—and in this city gave birth to a daughter. This daughter Vilson took (not knowing to whom she belonged) and rescued her from the infamy entailed on her by birth. Unfortunate creature! her mother hoped to have claimed her one day: but it is now too late—that mother having taken refuge in a safe retreat, where she has no reason to apprehend further molestation;—where she will be enabled to shake off the erroneous principles of the religion in which she was brought up—where she will do penance for the caprice and folly which have embittered your days, and for the involuntary crime she has been
guilty

guilty of. Adieu ! Pardon a woman who never intended to injure you, and who never once failed in her love. Think of her sometimes with pity ; and let not your son marry his sister."

After I had finished reading this letter, I remained for some time in a state of insensibility ; and when I recovered, my faculties became a prey to the most horrid reflections. The fatal stroke which had separated me from Silvia cut me to the soul ; but the birth of Sophia plunged me into the deepest despair. This last misfortune for a moment bore down all before it, and my preceding calamities seemed light as air in comparison to this.

Vilson, in the mean time, amazed at my not appearing, came running to know what was the matter, and found me in the state I have described. What is the meaning of all this ? cried he ; are you ill ?—or——

Oh my friend ! exclaimed I, interrupting him ; this day, which was to have been a day of gladness, is destined to grief and de-

spair. You know all the secrets of my soul—you know my anguish—and that Silvia fled from me many years ago. She has this day written me a letter. Read it—and pity me—but no more of this marriage—this dreadful intelligence is arrived just in time !

Vilson read the letter, trembling ; and when he had done, remained in a state resembling mine ; while my son and Sophia, impatient of delay, came in search of us, and entered to complete the scene. Grieved at our situation, they gazed at us in silent astonishment ; and not daring to interrogate us, waited with trembling impatience for an explanation of what they saw.

I had turned my head aside when they entered, dreading to look at Sophia ; but my eyes soon strayed involuntarily towards her, and I thought I discovered in her countenance a strong likeness of my wife. Vilson examined her features also, and then looking at me, seemed to indicate that he had found out a great resemblance between us.

My

My son was terrified.—He knew not what to think.—He in turn articulated my name and that of Sophia.—He stood motionless—and by his enquiring eyes seemed to ask for an explanation he wished for yet dreaded. Take this, said I, giving him the letter, and read it with attention; for it comes from your mother. He did as I desired: and when he had done, put forth a cry of distress. Sophia my sister! exclaimed he; O! Heavens!—and threw himself into a chair; while Sophia, amazed at what she heard and saw, snatched up the letter, and reading it in turn, joined in our shuddering and terror.

We remained in this state of grief, darkness, and confusion, above an hour, and then tears succeeded to silence.—My son wept—Sophia sobbed—I sighed—and Vilson, looking at us alternately, wept himself.

Sir, said Sophia to me at last, your wife is then my mother, but who my father is I—— Here she stopped for some time,

shedding a torrent of tears, and then proceeded thus—I am a burden to you—a disgrace—I aggravate your misery, and double your misfortunes!

By an involuntary motion, I started up at these words (my heart palpitating, and my whole frame in disorder) and running to Sophia, assured her I imputed not to her the faults of others—I feel that you are dear to me, said I—and you shall be my daughter—I will if possible restore your mother to you, and you shall be induced to love, esteem, and pity me.

My afflicted son; who had been all this time listening to the consolatory and philosophical arguments of Vilson, began to be more composed, and exclaimed at last—O! Sophia!—I am then only to love you as a sister!—unhappy!—but, O! Vilson!—worthy Vilson!—I admire your conduct, but could not in your case have followed your example!—you are the only man worthy of Sophia, and I embrace you as my brother.

Vilson

Vilson embraced him in turn, and then looked at Sophia and me as if for permission to throw himself at her feet. Vilson, said I, Sophia is yours; and it gives me great satisfaction to be thus closely allied to the friend of my heart. But before Sophia becomes yours, I must restore to her a mother—I must regain my wife. That idea struck me before it did you, interrupted Vilson; for could I have enjoyed happiness even with Sophia, while my friend was miserable?—No!—The restoration of your felicity is my first concern, and I will immediately fly to find out your wife. Sophia, added he; you hesitated between gratitude and fraternal love; for I am persuaded your blood flows from the same source, and that you are both the children of Floricourt. Fraternal affection is easily mistaken for passion at your age, and that proved the strongest. Friendship—gratitude—these are cold terms—O! Sophia! can you love me?

K 5

Sophia

Sophia raised her eyes ; a crimson blush overspread her countenance ; and she replied—my affection for my brother was involuntary ; but that I feel for you is founded on esteem, and springs from your generous conduct. I love Floricourt because he is my brother, and I love you because you are my friend. Make his father happy—I dare not call him mine—and if your felicity depends on me, O! Vilson! you have nothing to fear.

This assurance made Vilson completely happy. But in his usual way, he sacrificed his own felicity to that of his friend, and suspended his transports in order to think of finding out Silvia. He again read the letter I had received from her, and showed me a passage in it which the agitation of my mind had prevented my paying much attention to at first reading, but which inspired my friend with the most sanguine hopes : the passage ran thus—“ I have abjured my former wrong principles of religion, and am in a safe retreat.”

Silvia

Silvia is certainly in a convent, cried Vilson; she confesses she has renounced her former errors, and that she is in a safe retreat—a retreat, perhaps, that proved her asylum soon after the birth of Sophia. She certainly committed her daughter to my care, knowing our friendship; and was secretly informed of her intended marriage. She cannot therefore be far off—this city perhaps—But I fly to discover her retreat.

Saying these words, he quitted us, and I remained with my children. The repugnance—the delicacy I at first felt, yielded insensibly to the frankness, innocence, and graces of Sophia; and I looked on her as my child. The horrid outrage of Valoure terrified me no longer; and knowing her to be the daughter of Silvia (who had never once ceased to love me) I felt my affection for her hourly increase. My son too seemed to plead for her in my heart, as one whom he tenderly loved, though his ardent passion for her had subsided into
friendship,

friendship, and his love for her into fraternal affection.

I embraced them in turn—I called them my children—and passed the whole day in their company. I talked to them of their mother—I complained of her absence—and trembled lest I should never see her more.

Vilson's stay (as he returned not all the following night) gave me dreadful apprehensions, which were redoubled the next morning by my receiving no intelligence from him. At noon, however, he sent me the following short letter.

“ I have found out where Silvia is, and am to see her presently; tho' I have met with obstacles in so doing which nothing but my boundless friendship for you could have ever induced me to encounter.”

I was transported with joy at first reading this billet; but soon after began to accuse Vilson of want of friendship in not having sooner communicated to me this happy intelligence,

telligence, and upbraided him in my heart for having kept me so long in suspense. I might have seen her by this time, cried I; I might have now folded her in my faithful arms, and might have bid defiance to misfortune. But where am I now to seek her? for Vilson—cruel Vilson tells me not where she is! In this state of extreme agitation and tormenting suspense did I pass four hours, by turns accusing Vilson and calling on the name of Silvia.

He came at last; and I exclaimed, where is your feeling, your consideration for me, Vilson?—you have kept me on the rack! I have done as I ought, replied he; Silvia is in the same convent where Julia suffered so much. By the sale of a few jewels she had in her possession, she raised a small sum, and by that means procured her admission into the convent. While I was hesitating, continued Vilson, how to begin my search, the almoner of this community came to visit me, and made such particular enquiries concerning

concerning my young relation and her intended marriage, that I formed suspicions of him. I asked questions in my turn; and his answers convinced me that he was better informed of what I wanted to know than he was willing to own. This was a clue I took advantage of; and opening myself further, extorted a confession from him greatly to my satisfaction. He owned he was the person who had had an eye on Sophia, and that he had very frequently been at my house to make enquiries after her.

Silvia, said he at last, is a pure soul in the sight of God; she has been pursued by guilt and uncleanness without having been corrupted; she is worth the esteem of the whole world, and especially so of her husband.

This information gave me great joy, pursued Vilson, and I intreated the monk to second my intentions, which were to restore her to you. He hesitated at first, and
made

made many objections. Silvia, said he, thinks of nothing but of leading a sequestered life. She has suffered too much in the world to think of returning to it again, and intends to devote her future days to peace and to repentance. No repentance is necessary, replied I; all that is required of Silvia is reparation; let her return to her husband, let her return to the unfortunate Floricourt, and his arms will always be open to receive her.

After a great deal more of this kind of conversation, I convinced him; and he immediately went to speak with Silvia. He had need of all his eloquence and ghostly persuasion to move her, and to prevail on her to change her resolution of remaining all her life sequestered from the world. I followed him to the door of the parlour—I heard their discourse—and was greatly affected by what Silvia said. Oh father! said she, with what sort of feelings can my husband behold me again?—I cannot bear the
idea

idea of encountering his glances!—can it be!—is it possible!—that he should still retain any degree of affection for a woman who—— Here she stopped for some minutes, and then continued thus—Besides, can I—oh! can I enjoy the sweets of that pure affection which at first united me to Floricourt? No!—no!—it can never be!—and Floricourt must himself shudder at the thoughts of being re-united to me!

I entered at this moment, and Silvia seemed struck at my appearance. Oh Vilson! said she, do you then indeed bring me peace?—is it really possible for Floricourt to wish for my return? I will not attempt to repeat all I said to her on the subject, and all the persuasive arguments my friendship for you induced me to make use of: suffice it to say, that her ardent love for you surmounted all her delicate scruples, and she at last yielded to the solicitations of the almoner and myself. She drooped her head on her bosom—she sighed—she wept—and

at

at last said, if I am really pardoned!—if I am forgiven!—if I am beloved!—

If she is beloved! interrupted I, with vehemence, can she doubt of that?—Oh Vilson, let us fly to remove these vain fears and unjust suspicions of my unbounded love!—let us restore her to happiness!—let us restore her to peace!

I departed instantly, without observing whether Vilson followed me or not, and flew directly to the convent—to those odious walls which had so long confined all that was dear to me. Oh, hateful place!—abominable prison! said I mentally, thou hast deprived me of Julia, but thou canst not deprive me of my wife! I flew to the turning-box, rung violently, and asked to speak with Madame Floricourt. The nun who turned the box rubbed her eyes, stared at me for some time, and then answered that she knew no such person. Not know her! replied I, in a rage—not know her!—how dare you say so?—she is my wife!—a wife
whom

whom you have long sequestered from her husband ! I charge you immediately to bring her hither !

The nun, who now thought me mad, shut the door against me, and called out for her sisters, my cries and fury filling her with terror, she scarce thought the surrounding walls which separated us a sufficient security, and trembled at the noise I made. My reason was gone—every thing I saw irritated me to madness—and I had no longer any command of myself. Barbarians ! inhuman wretches ! exclaimed I, do you mean to destroy Silvia as you did Julia ? No !—I am her husband—I have a right to demand her—restore her then I say—restore a wife to her husband—a mother to her children—or I will make you repent of your cruelty—I will appeal to a tribunal of justice—I will make your community tremble !

While I was going on at this rate, Vilson and the almoner arrived, to whom the nuns cried out from their retreat, beware of that
mad

mad man. Oh, Vilson ! cried I, the moment I saw him, oh my friend !—they detain my wife in spite of all my intreaties—they have shut her up in that abominable cloister, and refuse to let me see her—oh ! second me—second me, Vilson !—and let Silvia be once more restored to me !

My agitation and impatience were so great at the time I quitted Vilson to fly to the convent, that I never once thought of staying for any further explanations, and by my hurry involved myself in difficulties and vexations I might otherwise have avoided. The almoner however now explained the mystery, and informed me that Silvia had changed her name in order to prevent being enquired after. She at length descended ; and I exclaimed, oh Silvia !—Silvia !—do I once more see you !—do I once more behold the woman I adore !—oh tell me that you love me !—oh tell me— She was going to kneel, but I stopped the needless humiliation, and caught her in my arms. It is
for

for me to kneel, Silvia ! cried I, it is for me to entreat you to love me, and to return to a fond, fond husband ! She blushed—she cast down her eyes, streaming with tears—and was unable to speak. Take courage, added I; you are innocent—you are guiltless—let us forget what is past—your sorrows and sufferings have made ample amends for your involuntary crime, and were it otherwise, my heart would be ready to forgive you.

What shall I say more ? Silvia was restored to me—I took her home in my coach, and welcomed her to my House with transport. I called my son: Embrace your mother, said I, and let her bless you; and you, my dear Sophia, embrace her also; welcome her to her mansion—welcome her to the endearments of a fond husband, and to the affection of dutiful children. Do not blush, my dearest Silvia, added I, seeing her confusion, embrace your children and love me.

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In fine, I was at last made happy; and tasted that felicity which I had so long been in pursuit of. But, O strange inconsistency of human nature! which seems never designed for perfect bliss below, when my first transports subsided, (in spite of the unremitted attention of Silvia, whom I fondly loved) the remembrance of the past embittered the present. I however endeavoured to banish it, and redoubled my assiduities to Silvia. I made it my study to make her happy, and to conceal my inward grief. Sophia made Vilson, who adored her, happy, and my son soon married a respectable and accomplished woman. The children of these two marriages constitute the felicity of my old age; and Silvia and I have retired to one of my estates, where we pass our time in peace and tranquillity, sometimes painfully reflecting on the past, but always firmly attached to each other.

Conclusion

Conclusion by the Editor.

Floricourt died about two years ago, greatly regretted by his family; and Silvia has retired to the convent where she had so long resided.—You are all happy, my children, said she at quitting them, and have now no need of me: suffer me therefore to consecrate the remnant of my days to heaven, and to the remembrance of an husband whom I shall never cease to regret.

F I N I S.

